

THOMAS HARDY'S WORKS

VOLUME XVIII.

WESSEX POEMS





" At mothy curfew-tide  
They've a way of whispering to me."  
—*Friends Beyond*, p. 155

# Wessex Poems

And Other Verses

BY

THOMAS HARDY

*WITH THIRTY ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR*

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## P R E F A C E

OF the miscellaneous collection of verse that follows, only four pieces have been published, though many were written long ago, and others partly written. In some few cases the verses were turned into prose and printed as such, it having been unanticipated at that time that they might see the light.

Whenever an ancient and legitimate word of the district, for which there was no equivalent in received English, suggested itself as

the most natural, nearest, and often only expression of a thought, it has been made use of, on what seemed good grounds.

The pieces are in a large degree dramatic or personative in conception ; and this even where they are not obviously so.

The dates attached to some of the poems do not apply to the rough sketches given in illustration, which have been recently made, and, as may be surmised, are inserted for personal and local reasons rather than for their intrinsic qualities.

T. H.

*September* 1898.

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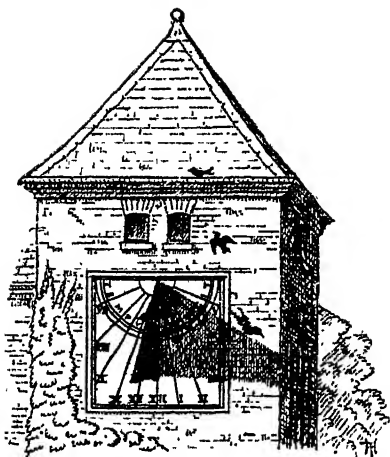
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## THE TEMPORARY THE ALL

**C**HANGE and chancefulness in my  
flowering youthtime,  
Set me sun by sun near to one unchosen ;  
Wrought us fellowly, and despite divergence,  
Friends interblent us.

"Cherish him can I while the true one forth-  
come—

Come the rich fulfiller of my prevision ;  
Life is roomy yet, and the odds unbounded."  
So self-communed I.

Thwart my wistful way did a damsel saunter,  
Fair, the while unformed to be all-eclipsing ;  
"Maiden meet," held I, "till arise my forefelt  
Wonder of women."

Long a visioned hermitage deep desiring,  
Tenements uncouth I was fain to house in ;  
"Let such lodging be for a breath-while,"  
thought I,  
"Soon a more seemly.

"Then, high handiwork will I make my life-  
deed,  
Truth and Light outshow ; but the ripe time  
pending,  
Intermissive aim at the thing sufficeth."  
Thus I . . . But lo, me !

Mistress, friend, place, aims to be bettered  
straightway,  
Bettered not has Fate or my hand's achieving ;  
Sole the showance those of my onward earth-  
track—  
Never transcended !

## AMABEL

I MARKED her ruined hues,  
Her custom-straitened views,  
And asked, "Can there indwell  
My Amabel?"

I looked upon her gown,  
Once rose, now earthen brown ;  
The change was like the knell  
Of Amabel.

Her step's mechanic ways  
Had lost the life of May's ;  
Her laugh, once sweet in swell,  
    Spoilt Amabel.

I mused : " Who sings the strain  
I sang ere warmth did wane ?  
Who thinks its numbers spell  
    His Amabel ? " —

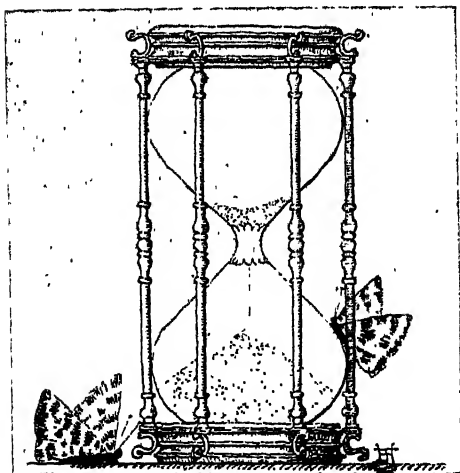
Knowing that, though Love cease,  
Love's race shows undecrease ;  
All find in dorp or dell  
    An Amabel.

—I felt that I could creep  
To some housetop, and weep,  
That Time the tyrant fell  
    Ruled Amabel !

I said (the while I sighed  
That love like ours had died),  
" Fond things I'll no more tell  
    To Amabel,

“ But leave her to her fate,  
And fling across the gate,  
‘Till the Last Trump, farewell,  
O Amabel ! ’ ”

1865.



## H A P

I F but some vengeful god would call to me  
From up the sky, and laugh : "Thou suffering thing,  
Know that thy sorrow is my ecstasy,  
That thy love's loss is my hate's profiting !"

Then would I bear, and clench myself, and  
die,  
Steeled by the sense of ire unmerited ;  
Half-eased in that a Powerfuller than I  
Had willed and meted me the tears I shed.

But not so. How arrives it joy lies slain,  
And why unblooms the best hope ever sown ?  
—Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,  
And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan. . . .  
These purblind Doomsters had as readily  
    strown  
Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain.

1866.

## “IN VISION I ROAMED”

TO —

**I**N vision I roamed the flashing Firmament,  
So fierce in blazon that the Night waxed wan,  
As though with an awed sense of such ostent ;  
And as I thought my spirit ranged on and on

In footless traverse through ghaſt heights of ſky,  
To the laſt chambers of the monſtrous Dome,  
Where ſtars the brighteſt here to darkneſs die :  
Then, any ſpot on our own Earth ſeemed  
Home !

And the sick grief that you were far away  
Grew pleasant thankfulness that you were near,  
Who might have been, set on some outstep  
    sphere,  
Less than a Want to me, as day by day  
I lived unaware, uncaring all that lay  
Locked in that Universe taciturn and drear.

## AT A BRIDAL

TO ———

WHEN you paced forth, to wait maternity,

A dream of other offspring held my mind,  
Compounded of us twain as Love designed ;  
Rare forms, that corporate now will never be !

Should I, too, wed as slave to Mode's decree,  
And each thus found apart, of false desire,  
A stolid line, whom no high aims will fire  
As had fired ours could ever have mingled we ;

And, grieved that lives so matched should mis-  
compose,

Each mourn the double waste ; and question  
dare

To the Great Dame whence incarnation flows,  
Why those high-purposed children never were :  
What will she answer ? That she does not  
care

If the race all such sovereign types unknowns.

## POSTPONEMENT

S NOW-BOUND in woodland, a mournful  
word,  
Dropt now and then from the bill of a  
bird,  
Reached me on wind-wafts ; and thus I heard,  
Wearily waiting :—

“ I planned her a nest in a leafless tree,  
But the passers eyed and twitted me,  
And said : ‘ How reckless a bird is he,  
Cheerily mating ! ’

“ Fear-filled, I stayed me till summer-tide,  
In lewth of leaves to throne her bride ;  
But alas ! her love for me waned and died,  
Wearily waiting.

“ Ah, had I been like some I see,  
Born to an evergreen nesting-tree,  
None had eyed and twitted me,  
Cheerily mating ! ”

A CONFESSION TO A FRIEND  
IN TROUBLE

YOUR troubles shrink not, though I feel  
them less

Here, far away, than when I tarried near ;  
I even smile old smiles—with listlessness—  
Yet smiles they are, not ghastly mockeries mere.

A thought too strange to house within my brain  
Haunting its outer precincts I discern :  
—*That I will not show zeal again to learn  
Your griefs, and, sharing them, renew my pain. . . .*

16    CONFESSION TO A FRIEND IN TROUBLE

It goes, like murky bird or buccaneer  
That shapes its lawless figure on the main,  
And each new impulse tends to make outflee  
The unseemly instinct that had lodgment here;  
Yet, comrade old, can bitterer knowledge be  
Than that, though banned, such instinct was  
    in me !

1866.

## NEUTRAL TONES

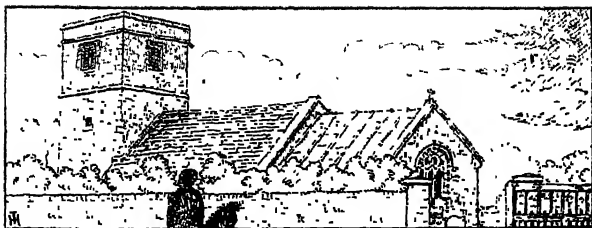
WE stood by a pond that winter day,  
And the sun was white, as though  
chidden of God,  
And a few leaves lay on the starving sod,  
—They had fallen from an ash, and  
were gray.

Your eyes on me were as eyes that rove  
Over tedious riddles solved years ago ;  
And some words played between us to and  
fro—  
On which lost the more by our love.

The smile on your mouth was the dearest  
thing

Alive enough to have strength to die ;  
And a grin of bitterness swept thereby  
Like an ominous bird a-wing. . . .

Since then, keen lessons that love deceives,  
And wrings with wrong, have shaped to me  
Your face, and the God-curst sun, and a tree,  
And a pond edged with grayish leaves.

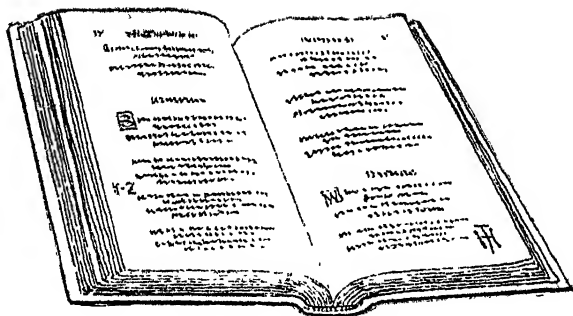


## S H E

### AT HIS FUNERAL

**T**HEY bear him to his resting-place—  
In slow procession sweeping by ;  
I follow at a stranger's space ;  
His kindred they, his sweetheart I.  
Unchanged my gown of garish dye,  
Though sable-sad is their attire ;  
But they stand round with griefless eye,  
Whilst my regret consumes like fire !





## HER INITIALS

UPON a poet's page I wrote  
 Of old two letters of her name ;  
 Part seemed she of the effulgent thought  
 Whence that high singer's rapture came.  
 —When now I turn the leaf the same  
 Immortal light illumines the lay,  
 But from the letters of her name  
 The radiance has died away !

1869.



## HER DILEMMA

(IN — CHURCH)

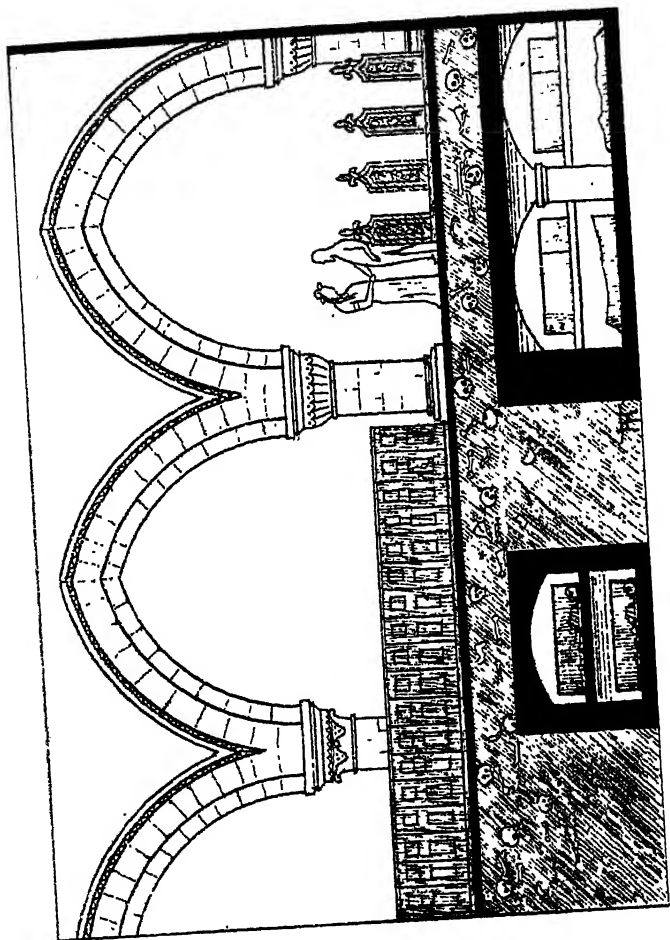
THE two were silent in a sunless church,  
Whose mildewed walls, uneven paving-  
stones,  
And wasted carvings passed antique research;  
And nothing broke the clock's dull mono-  
tones.

Leaning against a wormy poppy-head,  
So wan and worn that he could scarcely  
stand,

—For he was soon to die,—he softly said,  
“Tell me you love me!”—holding hard her  
hand.

She would have given a world to breathe  
“yes” truly,  
So much his life seemed hanging on her  
mind,  
And hence she lied, her heart persuaded  
thoroughly  
’Twas worth her soul to be a moment kind.

But the sad need thereof, his nearing death,  
So mocked humanity that she shamed to prize  
A world conditioned thus, or care for breath  
Where Nature such dilemmas could devise.





## REVULSION

THOUGH I waste watches framing words  
to fetter

Some spirit to mine own in clasp and kiss,  
Out of the night there looms a sense 'twere  
better

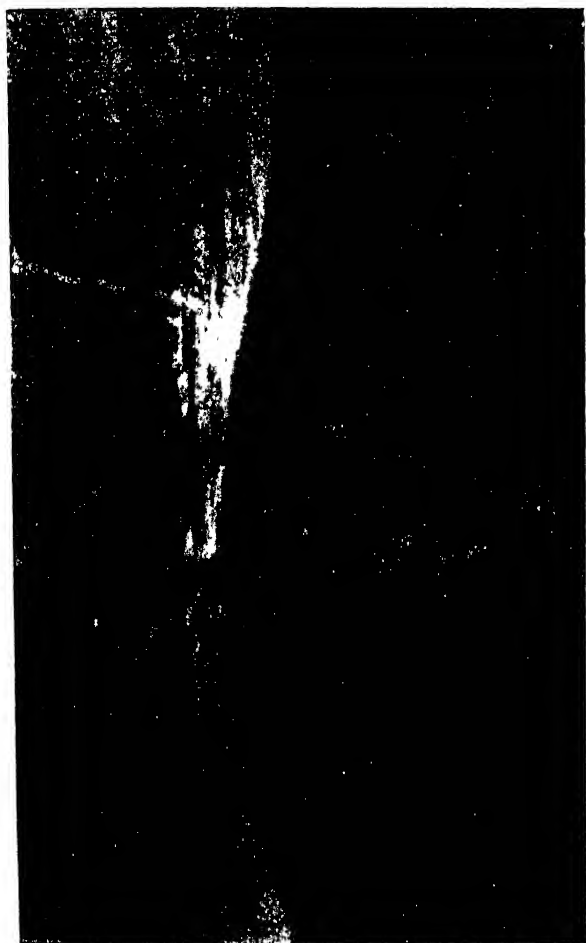
To fail obtaining whom one fails to miss.

For winning love we win the risk of losing,  
And losing love is as one's life were riven ;  
It cuts like contumely and keen ill-using  
To cede what was superfluously given.

Let me then feel no more the fateful thrilling  
That devastates the love-worn wooer's frame,  
The hot ado of fevered hopes, the chilling  
That agonizes disappointed aim !  
So may I live no junctive law fulfilling,  
And my heart's table bear no woman's name.

1866.





## SHE, TO HIM

### I

WHEN you shall see me in the toils of  
Time,

My lauded beauties carried off from me,  
My eyes no longer stars as in their prime,  
My name forgot of Maiden Fair and Free ;

When in your being heart concedes to mind,  
And judgment, though you scarce its process  
know,

Recalls the excellencies I once enshrined,  
And you are irked that they have withered so :

Remembering that with me lies not the blame,  
That Sportsman Time but rears his brood to  
kill,

Knowing me in my soul the very same—  
One who would die to spare you touch of ill !—  
Will you not grant to old affection's claim  
The hand of friendship down Life's sunless  
hill ?

## SHE, TO HIM

### II

PERHAPS, long hence, when I have  
passed away,  
Some other's feature, accent, thought like mine,  
Will carry you back to what I used to say,  
And bring some memory of your love's decline.

Then you may pause awhile and think, "Poor  
jade!"

And yield a sigh to me—as ample due,  
Not as the tittle of a debt unpaid  
To one who could resign her all to you—

And thus reflecting, you will never see  
That your thin thought, in two small words  
conveyed,  
Was no such fleeting phantom-thought to me,  
But the Whole Life wherein my part was  
played ;  
And you amid its fitful masquerade  
A Thought—as I in yours but seem to be.

## SHE, TO HIM

### III

I WILL be faithful to thee ; aye, I will !  
And Death shall choose me with a wondering eye  
That he did not discern and domicile  
One his by right ever since that last Good-bye !

I have no care for friends, or kin, or prime  
Of manhood who deal gently with me here ;  
Amid the happy people of my time  
Who work their love's fulfilment, I appear

Numb as a vane that cankers on its point,  
True to the wind that kissed ere canker came;  
Despised by souls of Now, who would dis-  
joint  
The mind from memory, and make Life all  
aim,

My old dexterities of hue quite gone,  
And nothing left for Love to look upon.

## SHE, TO HIM

### IV

**T**HIS love puts all humanity from me ;  
I can but maledict her, pray her dead,  
For giving love and getting love of thee—  
Feeding a heart that else mine own had fed !

How much I love I know not, life not known,  
Save as some unit I would add love by ;  
But this I know, my being is but thine  
own—

Fused from its separateness by ecstasy.

And thus I grasp thy amplitudes, of her  
Ungrasped, though helped by nigh-regarding  
eyes ;

Canst thou then hate me as an envier  
Who see unrecked what I so dearly prize ?  
Believe me, Lost One, Love is lovelier  
The more it shapes its moan in selfish-wisc.

## D I T T Y

(E. L. G.)

BENEATH a knap where flown  
Nestlings play,  
Within walls of weathered stone,  
Far away  
From the files of formal houses,  
By the bough the firstling browses,  
Lives a Sweet : no merchants meet,  
No man barter, no man sells  
Where she dwells.

Upon that fabric fair

“ Here is she ! ”

Seems written everywhere

Unto me.

But to friends and nodding neighbours,

Fellow-wights in lot and labours,

Who descry the times as I,

No such lucid legend tells

Where she dwells.

Should I lapse to what I was

Ere we met ;

(Such can not be, but because

Some forget

Let me feign it)—none would notice

That where she I know by rote is

Spread a strange and withering change,

Like a drying of the wells

Where she dwells.

To feel I might have kissed—

Loved as true—

Otherwhere, nor Mine have missed

My life through,

Had I never wandered near her,  
Is a smart severe—severer  
In the thought that she is nought,  
Even as I, beyond the dells  
Where she dwells.

And Devotion droops her glance  
To recall  
What bond-servants of Chance  
We are all.

I but found her in that, going  
On my errant path unknowing,  
I did not out-skirt the spot  
That no spot on earth excels,  
—Where she dwells !





## THE SERGEANT'S SONG

(1803)

WHEN Lawyers strive to heal a breach,  
And Parsons practise what they  
preach ;

Then Little Boney he'll pounce down,  
And march his men on London town !

Rollicum-rorum, tol-lol-lorum,  
Rollicum-rorum, tol-lol-lay !

When Justices hold equal scales,  
And Rogues are only found in jails ;

Then Little Boney he'll pounce down,  
And march his men on London town !

Rollicum-rorum, &c.

When Rich Men find their wealth a curse,  
And fill therewith the Poor Man's purse ;  
Then Little Boney he'll pounce down,  
And march his men on London town !

Rollicum-rorum, &c.

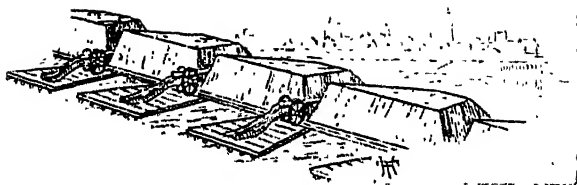
When Husbands with their Wives agree,  
And Maids won't wed from modesty ;  
Then Little Boney he'll pounce down,  
And march his men on London town !

Rollicum-rorum, tol-tol-lorum,

Rollicum-rorum, tol-lol-lay !

1878.

*Published in "The Trumpet-Major," 1880.*



## VALENCIENNES

(1793)

BY CORP'L TULLIDGE: *see "The Trumpet-Major"*

IN MEMORY OF S. C. (PENSIONER). DIED 184-

WE trenched, we trumpeted and  
drummed,  
And from our mortars tons of iron  
hummed  
Ath'art the ditch, the month we bombed  
The Town o' Valencieën.

'Twas in the June o' Ninety-dree  
(The Duke o' Yark our then Commander  
beën)

The German Legion, Guards, and we  
Laid siege to Valencieën.

This was the first time in the war  
That French and English spilled each other's  
gore ;  
—Few dreamt how far would roll the roar  
Begun at Valencieën !

'Twas said that we'd no business there  
A-topperèn the French for disagreeën ;  
However, that's not my affair—  
We were at Valencieën.

Such snocks and slats, since war began  
Never knew raw recruit or veteràn ;  
Stone-deaf therence went many a man  
Who served at Valencieën.

Into the streets, ath'art the sky,  
A hundred thousand balls and bombs were  
    fleèn ;  
And harmless townsfolk fell to die  
    Each hour at Valencieën !

And, sweatèn wi' the bombardiers,  
A shell was slent to shards anighst my ears :  
    —'Twas nigh the end of hopes and fears  
    For me at Valencieën !

They bore my wownded frame to camp,  
And shut my gapèn skull, and washed en  
    clean,  
And jined en wi' a zilver clamp  
    Thik night at Valencieën.

“ We've fetchèd en back to quick from  
    dead ;  
But never more on earth while rose is red  
    Will drum rouse Corpel ! ” Doctor said  
    O' me at Valencieën.

'Twer true. No voice o' friend or foe  
Can reach me now, or any livèn beën ;  
And little have I power to know  
Since then at Valencieën !

I never hear the zummer hums  
O' bees ; and don' know when the cuckoo  
comes ;  
But night and day I hear the bombs  
We threw at Valencieën. . . .

As for the Duke o' Yark in war,  
T ere be some volk whose judgment o' en is  
meän ;  
But this I say—'a was not far  
From great at Valencieën.

O' wild wet nights, when all seems sad,  
My wovnds come back, as though new wovnds  
I'd had ;  
But yet—at times I'm sort o' glad  
I fout at Valencieën.

Well: Heaven wi' its jasper halls  
Is now the on'y Town I care to be in. . . .  
Good Lord, if Nick should bomb the walls  
As we did Valencieën !

1878-1897.



# SAN SEBASTIAN

(*August 1813*)

WITH THOUGHTS OF SERGEANT M—— (PENSIONER),  
WHO DIED 185—

“**W**HY, Sergeant, stray on the Ivel  
Way,  
As though at home there were spectres  
rife ?  
From first to last 'twas a proud career !  
And your sunny years with a gracious wife  
Have brought you a daughter dear.

"I watched her to-day ; a more comely maid,  
As she danced in her muslin bowed with blue,  
Round a Hintock maypole never gayed."

—"Aye, aye ; I watched her this day, too,  
As it happens," the Sergeant said.

"My daughter is now," he again began,  
"Of just such an age as one I knew  
When we of the Line and Forlorn-hope van,  
On an August morning—a chosen few—  
Stormed San Sebastian.

"She's a score less three ; so about was *she*—  
The maiden I wronged in Peninsular days. . . .  
You may prate of your prowess in lusty times,  
But as years gnaw inward you blink your bays,  
And see too well your crimes !

"We'd stormed it at night, by the vlanker-light  
Of burning towers, and the mortar's boom :  
We'd topped the breach ; but had failed to stay,  
For our files were misled by the baffling gloom ;  
And we said we'd storm by day.





“ So, out of the trenches, with features set,  
On that hot, still morning, in measured pace,  
Our column climbed ; climbed higher yet,  
Past the fauss’bray, scarp, up the curtain-face,  
And along the parapet.

“ From the battered hornwork the cannoneers  
Hove crashing balls of iron fire ;  
On the shaking gap mount the volunteers  
In files, and as they mount expire  
Amid curses, groans, and cheers.

“ Five hours did we storm, five hours re-form,  
As Death cooled those hot blood pricked on ;  
Till our cause was helped by a woe within :  
They swayed from the summit we’d leapt  
upon,  
And madly we entered in.

“ On end for plunder, ’mid rain and thunder  
That burst with the lull of our cannonade,  
We vamped the streets in the stifling air—  
Our hunger unsoothed, our thirst unstayed—  
And ransacked the buildings there.

“Down the stony steps of the house-fronts  
white

We rolled rich puncheons of Spanish grape,  
Till at length, with the fire of the wine alight,  
I saw at a doorway a fair fresh shape—

A woman, a sylph, or sprite.

“Afeard she fled, and with heated head  
I pursued to the chamber she called her  
own ;

—When might is right no qualms deter,  
And having her helpless and alone

I wreaked my will on her.

“She raised her beseeching eyes to me,  
And I heard the words of prayer she sent  
In her own soft language. . . . Seemingly  
I copied those eyes for my punishment

In begetting the girl you see !

“So, to-day I stand with a God-set brand  
Like Cain's, when he wandered from kindred's  
ken. . . .

I served through the war that made Europe  
free ;  
I wived me in peace-year. But, hid from men,  
I bear that mark on me.

“And I nightly stray on the Ivel Way  
As though at home there were spectres rife ;  
I delight me not in my proud career ;  
And 'tis coals of fire that a gracious wife  
Should have brought me a daughter  
dear !”



## THE STRANGER'S SONG

(*As sung by MR. CHARLES CHARRINGTON in the play of*  
*“The Three Wayfarers”*)

O MY trade it is the rarest one,  
Simple shepherds all—  
My trade is a sight to see ;  
For my customers I tie, and take 'em up on  
high,  
And waft 'em to a far countree !

My tools are but common ones,  
Simple shepherds all—

My tools are no sight to see :  
A little hempen string, and a post whereon to  
swing,  
Are implements enough for me !

To-morrow is my working day,  
Simple shepherds all—  
To-morrow is a working day for me :  
For the farmer's sheep is slain, and the lad  
who did it ta'en,  
And on his soul may God ha' mer-cy!

*Printed in "The Three Strangers," 1883.*



## THE BURGHERS

(17—)

THE sun had wheeled from Grey's to  
Dammer's Crest,  
And still I mused on that Thing imminent :  
At length I sought the High-street to the  
West.

The level flare raked pane and pediment  
And my wrecked face, and shaped my near-  
ing friend  
Like one of those the Furnace held unshent.

"I've news concerning her," he said. "Attend.  
They fly to-night at the late moon's first  
gleam :  
Watch with thy steel : two righteous thrusts  
will end

Her shameless visions and his passioned dream.  
I'll watch with thee, to testify thy wrong—  
To aid, maybe.—Law consecrates the scheme."

I started, and we paced the flags along  
Till I replied : "Since it has come to this  
I'll do it ! But alone. I can be strong."

Three hours past Curfew, when the Froom's  
mild hiss  
Reigned sole, undulled by whirr of merchan-  
dize,  
From Pummery-Tout to where the Gibbet is,

I crossed my pleasaunce hard by Glyd'path  
Rise,  
And stood beneath the wall. Eleven strokes  
went,  
And to the door they came, contrariwise,

And met in clasp so close I had but bent  
My lifted blade upon them to have let  
Their two souls loose upon the firmament.

But something held my arm. "A moment  
yet  
As pray-time ere you wantons die!" I said;  
And then they saw me. Swift her gaze was  
set

With eye and cry of love illimited  
Upon her Heart-king. Never upon me  
Had she thrown look of love so thorough-  
sped! . . .

At once she flung her faint form shieldingly  
On his, against the vengeance of my vows;  
The which o'erruling, her shape shielded he.

Blanked by such love, I stood as in a  
drowse,  
And the slow moon edged from the upland  
nigh,  
My sad thoughts moving thuswise: "I may  
house

And I may husband her, yet what am I  
But licensed tyrant to this bonded pair?  
Says Charity, Do as ye would be done by." . . .

Hurling my iron to the bushes there,  
I bade them stay. And, as if brain and  
breast  
Were passive, they walked with me to the  
stair.

Inside the house none watched; and on we  
prest  
Before a mirror, in whose gleam I read  
Her beauty, his,—and mine own mien un-  
blest;

Till at her room I turned. "Madam," I  
said,

"Have you the wherewithal for this? Pray  
speak.

Love fills no cupboard. You'll need daily  
bread."

"We've nothing, sire," said she; "and nothing  
seek.

'Twere base in me to rob my lord unaware;  
Our hands will earn a pittance week by  
week."

And next I saw she'd piled her raiment rare  
Within the garde-robcs, and her household  
purse,

Her jewels, and least lace of personal wear;

And stood in homespun Now grown wholly  
hers,

I handed her the gold, her jewels all,  
And him the choicest of her robes diverse

"I'll take you to the doorway in the wall,  
And then adieu," I to them. "Friends, with-  
draw."

They did so ; and she went—beyond recall.

And as I paused beneath the arch I saw  
Their moonlit figures—slow, as in surprise—  
Descend the slope, and vanish on the haw.

"'Fool,' some will say," I thought. "But  
who is wise,  
Save God alone, to weigh my reasons why?"  
—"Hast thou struck home?" came with the  
boughs' night-sighs.

It was my friend. "I have struck well.  
They fly,  
But carry wounds that none can cicatrize."  
—"Not mortal?" said he. "Lingering—  
worse," said I.

# LEIPZIG

(1813)

*Scene : The Master-tradesmen's Parlour at the Old  
Ship Inn, Casterbridge. Evening.*

“ O LD Norbert with the flat blue cap—  
A German said to be—  
Why let your pipe die on your lap,  
Your eyes blink absently ? ”—

—“ Ah ! . . . Well, I had thought till my cheek  
was wet

Of my mother—her voice and mien  
When she used to sing and pirouette,  
And touse the tambourine

“To the march that yon street-fiddler plies :  
    She told me 'twas the same  
She'd heard from the trumpets, when the  
    Allies  
Her city overcame.

“My father was one of the German Hussars,  
    My mother of Leipzig ; but he,  
Long quartered here, fetched her at close of  
    the wars,  
And a Wessex lad reared me.

“And as I grew up, again and again  
    She'd tell, after trilling that air,  
Of her youth, and the battles on Leipzig  
    plain  
And of all that was suffered there ! . . .

“—'Twas a time of alarms. Three Chiefs-  
    at-arms  
Combined them to crush One,  
And by numbers' might, for in equal fight  
    He stood the matched of none.

“ Carl Schwarzenberg was of the plot,  
And Blücher, prompt and prow,  
And Jean the Crown-Prince Bernadotte :  
Buonaparte was the foe.

“ City and plain had felt his reign  
From the North to the Middle Sea,  
And he'd now sat down in the noble town  
Of the King of Saxony.

“ October's deep dew its wet gossamer threw  
Upon Leipzig's lawns, leaf-strewn,  
Where lately each fair avenue  
Wrought shade for summer noon.

“ To westward two dull rivers crept  
Through miles of marsh and slough,  
Whereover a streak of whiteness swept—  
The Bridge of Lindenau.

“ Hard by, in the City, the One, care-tossed,  
Gloomed over his shrunken power,  
And without the walls the hemming host  
Waxed denser every hour.

“He had speech that night on the morrow’s  
designs

With his chiefs by the bivouac fire,  
While the belt of flames from the enemy’s  
lines

Flared nigher him yet and nigher.

“Three sky-lights then from the gudling  
trine

Told, ‘Ready!’ As they rose  
Their flashes seemed his Judgment-Sign  
For bleeding Europe’s woes.

“’Twas seen how the French watch-fires that  
night

Glowed still and steadily ;  
And the Three rejoiced, for they read in the  
sight  
That the One disdained to flee. . . .

“—Five hundred guns began the affray  
On next day morn at nine ;  
Such mad and mangling cannon-play  
Had never torn human line.

“Around the town three battles beat,  
Contracting like a gin;  
As nearer marched the million feet  
Of columns closing in.

“The first battle raged on the low Southern  
side;  
The second by the Western way;  
The nearing of the third on the North was  
heard:  
—The French held all at bay.

“Against the first band did the Emperor stand;  
Against the second stood Ney;  
Marmont against the third gave the order-  
word:  
—Thus raged it throughout the day.

“Fifty thousand sturdy souls on those trampled  
plains and knolls,  
Who met the dawn hopefully,  
And were lotted their shares in a quarrel not  
theirs,  
Dropt then in their agony.

“‘O,’ the old folks said, ‘ye Preachers  
stern !

O so-called Christian time !

When will men’s swords to ploughshares turn ?

When come the promised prime ?’ . . .

“—The clash of horse and man which that  
day began,

Closed not as evening wore ;

And the morrow’s armies, rear and van,

Still mustered more and more.

“From the City towers the Confederate  
Powers

Were eyed in glittering lines,

And up from the vast a murmuring passed

As from a wood of pines.

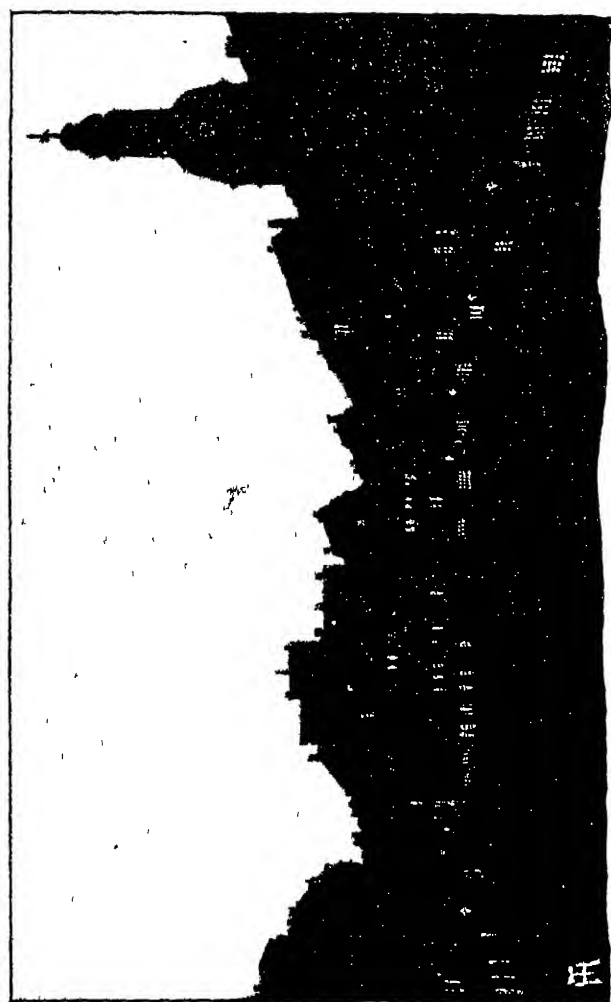
“‘Tis well to cover a feeble skill

By numbers !’ scoffed He ;

‘But give me a third of their strength, I’d fill

Half Hell with their soldiery !’





“All that day raged the war they waged,  
And again dumb night held reign,  
Save that ever upspread from the dark death-  
bed  
A miles-wide pant of pain.

“Hard had striven brave Ney, the true  
Bertrand,  
Victor, and Augereau,  
Bold Poniatowski, and Lauriston,  
To stay their overthrow ;

“But, as in the dream of one sick to death  
There comes a narrowing room  
That pens him, body and limbs and breath,  
To wait a hideous doom,

“So to Napoleon, in the hush  
That held the town and towers  
Through these dire nights, a creeping  
crush  
Seemed inborne with the hours.

“One road to the rearward, and but one,  
Did fitful Chance allow ;  
'Twas where the Pleiss' and Elster run—  
The Bridge of Lindenau.

“The nineteenth dawned. Down street and  
Platz  
The wasted French sank back,  
Stretching long lines across the Flats  
And on the bridge-way track ;

“When there surged on the sky an earthen  
wave,  
And stones, and men, as though  
Some rebel churchyard crew updrave  
Their sepulchres from below.

“To Heaven is blown Bridge Lindenau ;  
Wrecked regiments reel therefrom ;  
And rank and file in masses plough  
The sullen Elster-Strom.

“A gulf was LINDENAU ; and dead  
Were fifties, hundreds, tens ;  
And every current rippled red  
With Marshal's blood and men's.

“The smart MACDONALD swam therein,  
And barely won the verge ;  
Bold PONIATOWSKI plunged him in  
Never to re-emerge.

“Then stayed the strife. The remnants  
wound  
Their Rhineward way pell-mell ;  
And thus did LEIPZIG City sound  
An Empire's passing bell ;

“While in cavalcade, with band and blade,  
Came Marshals, Princes, Kings ;  
And the town was theirs . . . Ay, as  
simple maid,  
My mother saw these things !

"And whenever those notes in the street  
begin,

I recall her, and that far scene,  
And her acting of how the Allies marched in,  
And her touse of the tambourine!"



## THE PEASANT'S CONFESSION

“ Si le maréchal Grouchy avait été rejoint par l'officier que Napoléon lui avait expédié la veille à dix heures du soir, toute question eût disparu. Mais cet officier n'était point parvenu à sa destination, ainsi que le maréchal n'a cessé de l'affirmer toute sa vie, et il faut l'en croire, car autrement il n'aurait eu aucune raison pour hésiter. Cet officier avait-il été pris ? avait-il passé à l'ennemi ? C'est ce qu'on a toujours ignoré ”

—THIERS *Histoire de l'Empire* “ Waterloo ”

GOOD Father ! . . . 'Twas an eve in  
middle June,  
And war was waged anew  
By great Napoleon, who for years had strewn  
Men's bones all Europe through.

Three nights ere this, with columned corps  
he'd crossed

The Sambre at Charleroi,  
To move on Brussels, where the English host  
Dallied in Parc and Bois.

The yestertide we'd heard the gloomy gun  
Growl through the long-sunned day  
From Quatre Bras and Ligny ; till the dun  
Twilight suppressed the fray ;

Albert therein—as lated tongues bespoke—  
Brunswick's high heart was drained,  
And Prussia's Line and Landwehr, though  
unbroke,  
Stood cornered and constrained.

And at next noon-time Grouchy slowly passed  
With thirty thousand men :  
We hoped thenceforth no army, small or  
vast,  
Would trouble us again.

My hut lay deeply in a vale recessed,  
And never a soul seemed nigh  
When, reassured at length, we went to rest—  
My children, wife, and I.

But what was this that broke our humble  
ease ?

What noise, above the rain,  
Above the dripping of the poplar trees  
That smote along the pane ?

—A call of mastery, bidding me arise,  
Compelled me to the door,  
At which a horseman stood in martial  
guise—  
Splashed—sweating from every pore.

Had I seen Grouchy ? Yes ? Which track  
took he ?  
Could I lead thither on ?—  
Fulfilment would ensure gold pieces three,  
Perchance more gifts anon.

"I bear the Emperor's mandate," then he  
said,

"Charging the Marshal straight  
To strike between the double host ahead  
Ere they co-operate,

"Engaging Blucher till the Emperor put  
Lord Wellington to flight,  
And next the Prussians. This to set afoot  
Is my emprise to-night."

I joined him in the mist ; but, pausing, sought  
To estimate his say.  
Grouchy had made for Wavre ; and yet, on  
thought,  
I did not lead that way.

I mused : " If Grouchy thus instructed be,  
The clash comes sheer hereon ;  
My farm is stript. While, as for pieces  
three,  
Money the French have none.

"Grouchy unwarned, moreo'er, the English  
win,  
And mine is left to me—  
They buy, not borrow."—Hence did I begin  
To lead him treacherously.

By Joidoigne, near to east, as we on drew,  
Dawn pierced the humid air ;  
And eastward faced I with him, though I knew  
Never marched Grouchy there.

Near Ottignies we passed, across the Dyle  
(Lim'lette left far aside),  
And thence direct toward Pervez and Noville  
Through green grain, till he cried :

"I doubt thy conduct, man ! no track is  
here—  
I doubt thy gaged word !"  
Thereat he scowled on me, and pranced me  
near,  
And pricked me with his sword.

"Nay, Captain, hold ! We skirt, not trace  
the course

Of Grouchy," said I then :

"As we go, yonder went he, with his force  
Of thirty thousand men."

—At length noon nighed ; when west, from  
Saint-John's-Mound,  
A hoarse artillery boomed,  
And from Saint-Lambert's upland, chapel-  
crowned,  
The Prussian squadrons loomed.

Then to the wayless wet gray ground he  
leapt ;

"My mission fails !" he cried ;

"Too late for Grouchy now to intercept,  
For, peasant, you have lied !"

He turned to pistol me. I sprang, and drew  
The sabre from his flank,  
And 'twixt his nape and shoulder, ere he knew,  
I struck, and dead he sank.





I hid him deep in nodding rye and oat—  
His shroud green stalks and loam ;  
His requiem the corn-blade's husky note—  
And then I hastened home. . . .

—Two armies writhe in coils of red and  
blue,  
And brass and iron clang  
From Goumont, past the front of Waterloo,  
To Pap'lotte and Smohain.

The Guard Imperial wavered on the height ;  
The Emperor's face grew glum ;  
"I sent," he said, "to Grouchy yesternight,  
And yet he does not come !"

'Twas then, Good Father, that the French  
espied,  
Streaking the summer land,  
The men of Blücher. But the Emperor  
cried,  
"Grouchy is now at hand !"

And meanwhile Vand'leur, Vivian, Maitland,  
    Kempt,  
    Met d'Erlon, Friant, Ney ;  
But Grouchy—mis-sent, blamed, yet blame-  
    exempt—  
    Grouchy was far away.

By even, slain or struck, Michel the strong,  
    Bold Travers, Dnop, Delord,  
Smart Guyot, Reil-le, l'Heriter, Friant,  
    Scattered that champaign o'er.

Fallen likewise wronged Duhesme, and skilled  
    Lobau  
    Did that red sunset see ;  
Colbert, Legros, Blancard ! . . . . And of  
    the foe  
    Picton and Ponsonby ;

With Gordon, Canning, Blackman, Ompteda,  
    L'Estrange, Delancey, Packe,  
Grose, D'Oyly, Stables, Morice, Howard, Hay,

Smith, Phelps, Fuller, Lind, and Bat-  
tersby,

And hosts of ranksmen round . . . .  
Memorials linger yet to speak to thee  
Of those that bit the ground !

The Guards' last column yielded ; dykes of  
dead

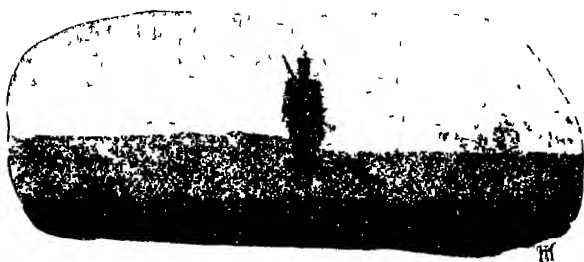
Lay between vale and ridge,  
As, thinned yet closing, faint yet fierce, they  
sped  
In packs to Genappe Bridge.

Safe was my stock ; my capple cow unslain ;  
Intact each cock and hen ;  
But Grouchy far at Wavre all day had lain,  
And thirty thousand men.

O Saints, had I but lost my earing corn  
And saved the cause once prized !  
O Saints, why such false witness had I  
borne  
When late I'd sympathized ! . . .

So now, being old, my children eye askance  
    My slowly dwindling store,  
And crave my mite ; till, worn with tarriance,  
    I care for life no more.

To Almighty God henceforth I stand confessed,  
    And Virgin-Saint Marie ;  
O Michael, John, and Holy Ones in rest,  
    Entreat the Lord for me !



## THE ALARM

(1803)

*See "The Trumpet-Major"*

IN MEMORY OF ONE OF THE WRITER'S FAMILY WHO WAS A  
VOLUNTEER DURING THE WAR WITH NAPOLEON

I N a ferny byway  
Near the great South - Wessex  
Highway,  
A homestead raised its breakfast-smoke aloft;  
The dew-damps still lay steamless, for the sun  
had made no sky-way,  
And twilight cloaked the croft.

'Twas hard to realize on  
This snug side the mute horizon  
That beyond it hostile armaments might  
steer,  
Save from seeing in the porchway a fair  
woman weep with eyes on  
A harnessed Volunteer.

In haste he'd flown there  
To his comely wife alone there,  
While marching south hard by, to still her  
fears,  
For she soon would be a mother, and few  
messengers were known there  
In these campaigning years.

'Twas time to be Good-bying,  
Since the assembly-hour was nighing  
In royal George's town at six that  
morn ;  
And betwixt its wharves and this retreat were  
ten good miles of hieing  
Ere ring of bugle-horn.

“ I've laid in food, Dear,  
And broached the spiced and brewed,  
Dear;  
And if our July hope should antedate,  
Let the char-wench mount and gallop by the  
halterpath and wood, Dear,  
And fetch assistance straight.

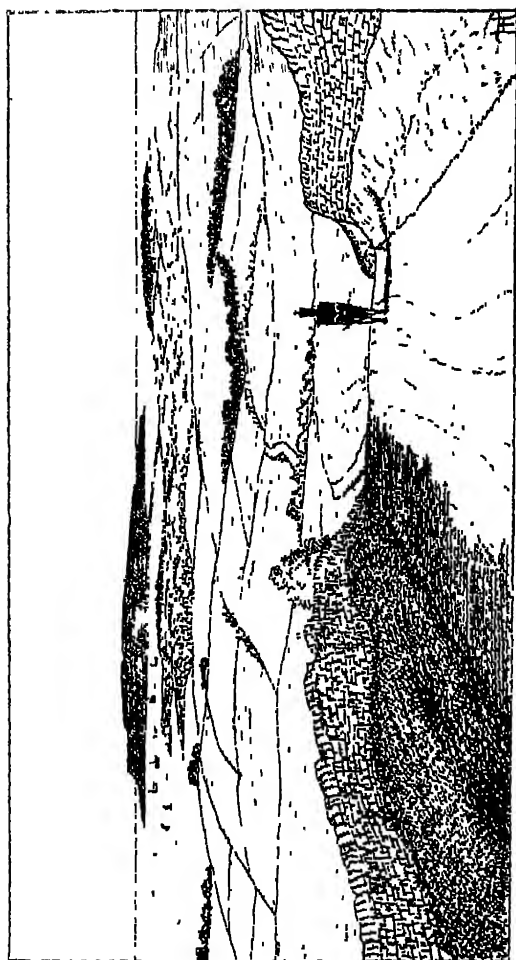
“ As for Buonaparte, forget him ;  
He's not like to land ! But let him,  
Those strike with aim who strike for wives  
and sons !  
And the war-boats built to float him ; 'twere  
but wanted to upset him  
A slat from Nelson's guns !

“ But, to assure thee,  
And of creeping fears to cure thee,  
If he *should* be rumoured anchoring in the  
Road,  
Drive with the nurse to Kingsbere ; and let  
nothing thence allure thee  
Till we've him safe-bestowed.

“ Now, to turn to marching matters :—  
I’ve my knapsack, firelock, spatters,  
Crossbelts, priming-horn, stock, bay’net,  
blackball, clay,  
Pouch, magazine, flints, flint-box that at every  
quick-step clatters ;  
    . . . My heart, Dear ; that must  
    stay ! ”

—With breathings broken  
Farewell was kissed unspoken,  
And they parted there as morning stroked  
the panes ;  
And the Volunteer went on, and turned, and  
twirled his glove for token,  
And took the coastward lanes

When above He’th Hills he found him,  
He saw, on gazing round him,  
The Barrow - Beacon burning — burning  
low,  
As if, perhaps, uplighted ever since he’d home-  
ward bound him ;  
And it meant : Expect the Foe !





Leaving the byway,  
And following swift the highway,  
Car and chariot met he, faring fast  
inland ;  
“He’s anchored, Soldier!” shouted some: “God  
save thee, marching thy way,  
Th’lt front him on the strand !”

He slowed ; he stopped ; he paltered  
Awhile with self, and faltered,  
“Why courting misadventure shoreward  
roam ?  
To Molly, surely ! Seek the woods with her  
till times have altered ;  
Charity favours home.

Else, my denying  
He would come she’ll read as lying—  
Think the Barrow-Beacon must have met  
my eyes—  
That my words were not unwareness, but  
deceit of her, while trying  
My life to jeopardize.

“ At home is stocked provision,  
And to-night, without suspicion,  
We might bear it with us to a covert  
near ;  
Such sin, to save a childing wife, would earn  
it Christ's remission,  
Though none forgive it here ! ”

While thus he, thinking,  
A little bird, quick drinking  
Among the crowfoot tufts the river  
bore,  
Was tangled in their stringy arms, and  
fluttered, well-nigh sinking,  
Near him, upon the moor.

He stepped in, reached, and seized it,  
And, preening, had released it  
But that a thought of Holy Writ oc-  
curred,  
And Signs Divine ere battle, till it seemed  
him Heaven had pleased it  
As guide to send the bird.

“O Lord, direct me ! . . . .

Doth Duty now expect me

To march a-coast, or guard my weak ones  
near ?

Give this bird a flight according, that I thence  
know to elect me

The southward or the rear.”

He loosed his clasp ; when, rising,

The bird—as if surmising—

Bore due to southward, crossing by the  
Froom,

And Durnover Great-Field and Fort, the  
soldier clear advising—

Prompted he wist by Whom.

Then on he panted

By grim Mai-Don, and slanted

Up the steep Ridge-way, hearkening be-  
twixt whiles ;

Till, nearing coast and harbour, he beheld the  
shore-line planted

With Foot and Horse for miles.

Mistrusting not the omen,  
He gained the beach, where Yeomen,  
Militia, Fencibles, and Pikemen bold,  
With Regulars in thousands, were enmassed  
to meet the Foemen,  
Whose fleet had not yet shoaled.

Captain and Colonel,  
Sere Generals, Ensigns vernal,  
Were there ; of neighbour-natives, Michel,  
Smith,  
Meggs, Bingham, Gambier, Cunningham,  
roused by the hues nocturnal  
Swoop on their land and kith.

But Buonaparte still tarried ;  
His project had miscarried ;  
At the last hour, equipped for victory,  
The fleet had paused ; his subtle combinations  
had been parried  
By British strategy.

Homeward returning  
Anon, no beacons burning,  
No alarms, the Volunteer, in modest bliss,  
Te Deum sang with wife and friends : " We  
praise Thee, Lord, discerning  
That Thou hast helped in this ! "



## HER DEATH AND AFTER

'T WAS a death-bed summons, and forth  
I went  
By the way of the Western Wall, so drear  
On that winter night, and sought a gate—  
The home, by Fate,  
Of one I had long held dear.

And there, as I paused by her tenement,  
And the trees shed on me their rime and hoar,  
I thought of the man who had left her lone—  
Him who made her his own  
When I loved her, long before.

The rooms within had the piteous shine  
That home-things wear when there's aught  
amiss ;

From the stairway floated the rise and fall  
Of an infant's call,  
Whose birth had brought her to this.

Her life was the price she would pay for that  
whine—

For a child by the man she did not love.

"But let that rest for ever," I said,

And bent my tread  
To the chamber up above.

She took my hand in her thin white own,  
And smiled her thanks—though nigh too  
weak—

And made them a sign to leave us there

Then faltered, ere  
She could bring herself to speak.

"'Twas to see you before I go—he'll condone  
Such a natural thing now my time's not  
much—

When Death is so near it hustles hence  
All passioned sense  
Between woman and man as such !

“ My husband is absent. As heretofore  
The City detains him. But, in truth,  
He has not been kind. . . . I will speak no  
blame,  
But—the child is lame ;  
O, I pray she may reach his ruth !

“ Forgive past days—I can say no more—  
Maybe if we'd wedded you'd now repine ! . . .  
But I treated you ill. I was punished. Fare-  
well !

—Truth shall I tell ?  
Would the child were yours and mine !

“ As a wife I was true. But, such my  
unease  
That, could I insert a deed back in Time,  
I'd make her yours, to secure your care ;  
And the scandal bear,  
And the penalty for the crime ! ”

—When I had left, and the swinging trees  
Rang above me, as lauding her candid say,  
Another was I. Her words were enough :

Came smooth, came rough,  
I felt I could live my day.

Next night she died ; and her obsequies  
In the Field of Tombs, by the Via renowned,  
Had her husband's heed. His tendance  
spent,

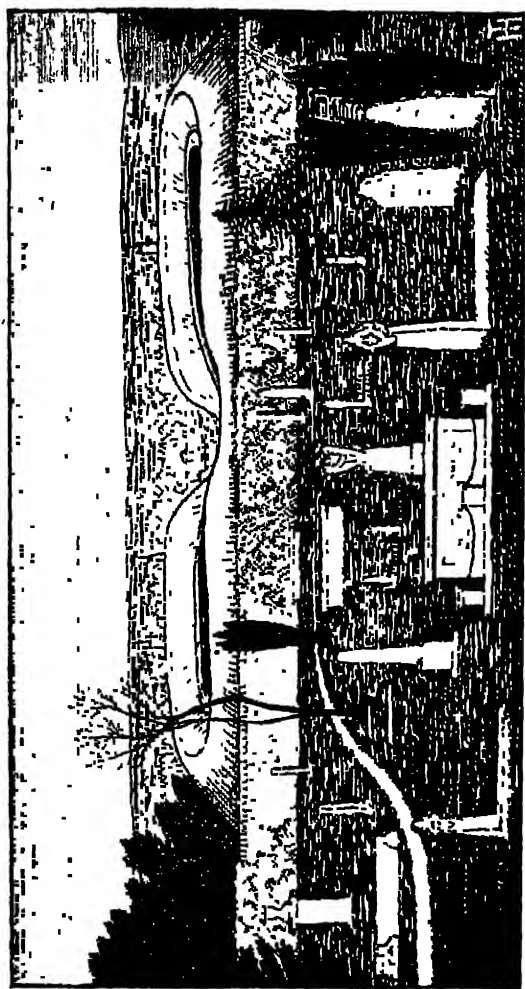
I often went  
And pondered by her mound.

All that year and the next year whiled,  
And I still went thitherward in the gloam ;  
But the Town forgot her and her nook,

And her husband took  
Another Love to his home.

And the rumour flew that the lame lone  
child

Whom she wished for its safety child of  
mine,





Was treated ill when offspring came  
Of the new-made dame,  
And marked a more vigorous line.

A smarter grief within me wrought  
Than even at loss of her so dear ;  
Dead the being whose soul my soul suffused,  
Her child ill-used,  
I helpless to interfere !

One eve as I stood at my spot of thought  
In the white-stoned Garth, brooding thus her  
wrong,  
Her husband neared ; and to shun his view  
By her hallowed mew  
I went from the tombs among

To the Cirque of the Gladiators which  
faced—  
That haggard mark of Imperial Rome,  
Whose Pagan echoes mock the chime  
Of our Christian time :  
It was void, and I inward clomb.

Scarce night the sun's gold touch displaced  
From the vast Rotund and the neighbouring  
dead

When her husband followed ; bowed ; half-  
passed,

With lip upcast ;

Then, halting, sullenly said :

"It is noised that you visit my first wife's  
tomb.

Now, I gave her an honoured name to bear  
While living, when dead. So I've claim to ask  
By what right you task  
My patience by vigiling there ?

"There's decency even in death, I assume ;  
Preserve it, sir, and keep away ;  
For the mother of my first-born you  
Show mind undue !

—Sir, I've nothing more to say."

A desperate stroke discerned I then—  
God pardon—or pardon not—the lie ;

She had sighed that she wished (lest the child  
should pine

Of slights) 'twere mine,

So I said : " But the father I.

" That you thought it yours is the way of  
men ;

But I won her troth long ere your day :

You learnt how, in dying, she summoned me?

'Twas in fealty.

—Sir, I've nothing more to say,

" Save that, if you'll hand me my little maid,  
I'll take her, and rear her, and spare you toil.

Think it more than a friendly act none can ;

I'm a lonely man,

While you've a large pot to boil.

" If not, and you'll put it to ball or blade—

To-night, to-morrow night, anywhen—

I'll meet you here. . . . But think of it,

And in season fit

Let me hear from you again."

—Well, I went away, hoping ; but nought I  
heard

Of my stroke for the child, till there greeted  
me

A little voice that one day came  
To my window-frame  
And babbled innocently :

“My father who's not my own, sends  
word

I'm to stay here, sir, where I belong !”

Next a writing came : “Since the child was  
the fruit

Of your lawless suit,  
Pray take her, to right a wrong.”

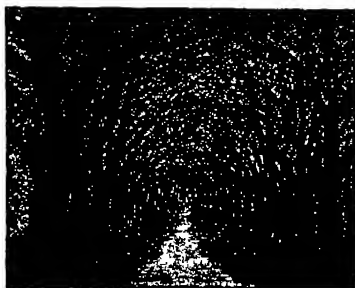
And I did. And I gave the child my love,  
And the child loved me, and estranged us  
none.

But compuncions loomed ; for I'd harmed  
the dead

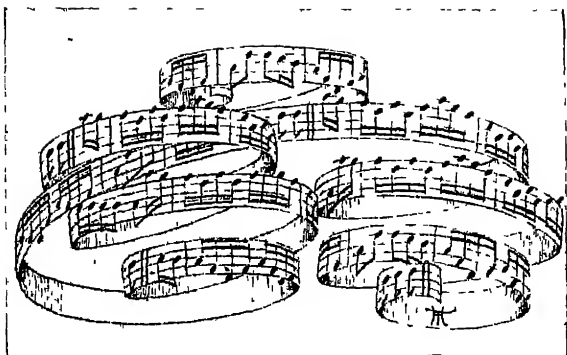
By what I'd said  
For the good of the living one.

—Yet though, God wot, I am sinner enough,  
And unworthy the woman who drew me so,  
Perhaps this wrong for her darling's good

She forgives, or would,  
If only she could know !







## THE DANCE AT THE PHOENIX

**T**O Jenny came a gentle youth  
From inland leazes lone,  
His love was fresh as apple-blooth  
By Parrett, Yeo, or Tone.  
And duly he entreated her  
To be his tender minister,  
And call him aye her own.

Fair Jenny's life had hardly been  
A life of modesty ;  
At Casterbridge experience keen  
Of many loves had she

From scarcely sixteen years above ;  
Among them sundry troopers of  
The King's-Own Cavalry.

But each with charger, sword, and gun,  
Had bluffed the Biscoay wave ;  
And Jenny prized her gentle one  
For all the love he gave.  
She vowed to be, if they were wed,  
His honest wife in heart and head  
From bride-ale hour to grave.

Wedded they were. Her husband's trust  
In Jenny knew no bound,  
And Jenny kept her pure and just,  
Till even malice found  
No sin or sign of ill to be  
In one who walked so decently  
The duteous helpmate's round.

Two sons were born, and bloomed to men,  
And roamed, and were as not :  
Alone was Jenny left again  
As ere her mind had sought

A solace in domestic joys,  
And ere the vanished pair of boys  
Were sent to sun her cot.

She numbered near on sixty years,  
And passed as elderly,  
When, in the street, with flush of fears,  
One day discovered she,  
From shine of swords and thump of drum,  
Her early loves from war had come,  
The King's-Own Cavalry.

She turned aside, and bowed her head  
Anigh Saint Peter's door ;  
"Alas for chastened thoughts !" she said ;  
"I'm faded now, and hoar,  
And yet those notes—they thrill me through,  
And those gay forms move me anew  
As in the years of yore !" . . .

'Twas Christmas, and the Phoenix Inn  
Was lit with tapers tall,  
For thirty of the trooper men  
Had vowed to give a ball

As "Theirs" had done ('twas handed down)  
 When lying in the selfsame town  
     Ere Buonaparté's fall.

That night the throbbing "Soldier's Joy,"  
     The measured tread and sway  
 Of "Fancy-Lad" and "Maiden Coy,"  
     Reached Jenny as she lay  
 Beside her spouse ; till springtide blood  
 Seemed scouring through her like a flood  
     That whisked the years away.

She rose, and rayed, and decked her head  
     Where the bleached hairs ran thin ,  
 Upon her cap two bows of red  
     She fixed with hasty pin ;  
 Unheard descending to the street,  
 She trod the flags with tune-led feet,  
     And stood before the Inn.

Save for the dancers', not a sound  
     Disturbed the icy air ;  
 No watchman on his midnight round  
     Or traveller was there ;

But over All-Saints', high and bright,  
 Pulsed to the music Sirius white,  
 The Wain by Bullstake Square.

She knocked, but found her further stride  
 Checked by a sergeant tall :  
 "Gay Granny, whence come you ?" he cried ;  
 "This is a private ball."  
 —"No one has more right here than me !  
 Ere you were born, man," answered she,  
 "I knew the regiment all !"

"Take not the lady's visit ill !"  
 Upspoke the steward free ;  
 "We lack sufficient partners still,  
 So, prithee let her be !"  
 They seized and whirled her 'mid the maze,  
 And Jenny felt as in the days  
 Of her immodesty.

Hour chased each hour, and night advanced ;  
 She sped as shod with wings ;  
 Each time and every time she danced—  
 Reels, jigs, poussettes, and flings :

They cheered her as she soared and  
 swooped,  
 (She'd learnt ere art in dancing drooped  
 From hops to slothful swings).

The favourite Quick - step "Speed the  
 Plough"—  
 (Cross hands, cast off, and wheel)—  
 "The Triumph," "Sylph," "The Row-  
 dow-dow,"  
 Famed "Major Malley's Reel,"  
 "The Duke of York's," "The Fairy Dance,"  
 "The Bridge of Lodi" (brought from  
 France),  
 She beat out, toe and heel.

The "Fall of Paris" clanged its close,  
 And Peter's chime told four,  
 When Jenny, bosom-beating, rose  
 To seek her silent door.  
 They tiptoed in escorting her,  
 Lest stroke of heel or clink of spur  
 Should break her goodman's snore.

The fire that late had burnt fell slack  
    When lone at last stood she ;  
Her nine-and-fifty years came back ;  
    She sank upon her knee  
Beside the durn, and like a dart  
A something arrowed through her heart  
    In shoots of agony.

Their footsteps died as she leant there,  
    Lit by the morning star  
Hanging above the moorland, where  
    The aged elm-rows are ;  
And, as o'ernight, from Pummery Ridge  
To Maembury Ring and Standfast Bridge  
    No life stirred, near or far.

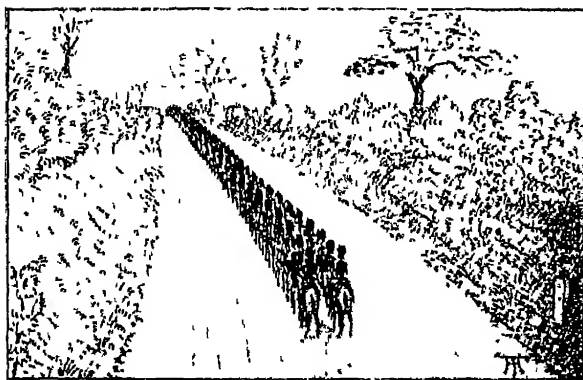
Though inner mischief worked amain,  
    She reached her husband's side ;  
Where, toil-weary, as he had lain  
    Beneath the patchwork pied  
When yestereve she'd forthward crept,  
And as unwitting, still he slept  
    Who did in her confide.

A tear sprang as she turned and viewed  
 His features free from guile ;  
 She kissed him long, as when, just wooed,  
 She chose his domicile.  
 Death menaced now ; yet less for life  
 She wished than that she were the wife  
 That she had been erstwhile.

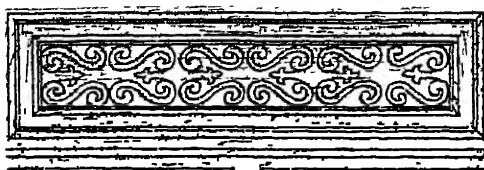
Time wore to six. Her husband rose  
 And struck the steel and stone ;  
 He glanced at Jenny, whose repose  
 Seemed deeper than his own.  
 With dumb dismay, on closer sight,  
 He gathered sense that in the night,  
 Or morn, her soul had flown.

When told that some too mighty strain  
 For one so many-yearred  
 Had burst her bosom's master-vein,  
 His doubts remained unstirred.  
 His Jenny had not left his side  
 Betwixt the eve and morning-tide :  
 —The King's said not a word.

Well ! times are not as times were then,  
Nor fair ones half so free ;  
And truly they were martial men,  
The King's-Own Cavalry  
And when they went from Casterbridge  
And vanished over Mellstock Ridge,  
'Twas saddest morn to see.







## THE CASTERBRIDGE CAPTAINS

(KHYBER PASS, 1842)

A TRADITION OF J. B. L——, T. G. B——, AND J. L——

THREE captains went to Indian wars,  
And only one returned :  
Their mate of yore, he singly wore  
The laurels all had earned.

At home he sought the ancient aisle  
 Wherein, untrumped of fame,  
 The three had sat in pupilage,  
 And each had carved his name.

The names, rough-hewn, of equal size,  
 Stood on the panel still ;  
 Unequal since.—“ ’Twas theirs to aim,  
 Mine was it to fulfil ! ”

—“ Who saves his life shall lose it,  
 friends ! ”

Outspake the preacher then,  
 Unweeting he his listener, who  
 Looked at the names again.

That he had come and they'd been  
 stayed,  
 'Twas but the chance of war :  
 Another chance, and they'd sat here,  
 And he had lain afar.

Yet saw he something in the lives  
Of those who'd ceased to live  
That sphered them with a majesty  
Which living failed to give.

Transcendent triumph in return  
No longer lit his brain ;  
Transcendence rayed the distant urn  
Where slept the fallen twain.





## A SIGN-SEEKER

**I** MARK the months in liveries dank and dry,  
The noontides many-shaped and hued ;  
I see the nightfall shades subtrude,  
And hear the monotonous hours clang negligently by.

I view the evening bonfires of the sun  
On hills where morning rains have hissed ;  
The eyeless countenance of the mist  
Pallidly rising when the summer droughts  
are done.

I have seen the lightning-blade, the leaping  
star,  
The cauldrons of the sea in storm,  
Have felt the earthquake's lifting arm,  
And trodden where abysmal fires and snow-  
cones are.

I learn to prophesy the hid eclipse,  
The coming of eccentric orbs ;  
To mete the dust the sky absorbs,  
To weigh the sun, and fix the hour each  
planet dips.

I witness fellow earth-men surge and strive ;  
Assemblies meet, and throb, and part ;  
Death's soothing finger, sorrow's smart ;  
—All the vast various moils that mean a  
world alive.

But that I fain would wot of shuns my sense—  
Those sights of which old prophets tell,  
Those signs the general word so well,  
Vouchsafed to their unheed, denied my  
long suspense.

In graveyard green, behind his monument  
To glimpse a phantom parent, friend,  
Wearing his smile, and "Not the end!"  
Outbreathing softly : that were blest enlighten-  
ment ;

Or, if a dead Love's lips, whom dreams reveal  
When midnight imps of King Decay  
Delve sly to solve me back to clay,  
Should leave some print to prove her spirit-  
kisses real ;

Or, when Earth's Frail lie bleeding of her  
Strong,  
If some Recorder, as in Writ,  
Near to the weary scene should flit  
And drop one plume as pledge that Heaven  
inscrolls the wrong.

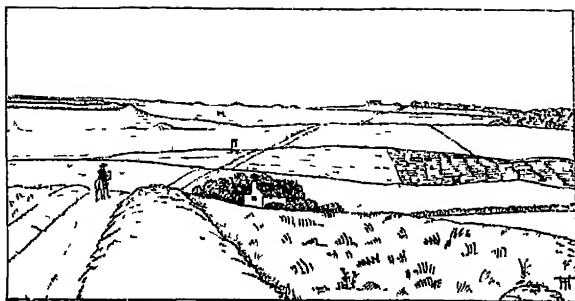
—There are who, rapt to heights of tranced  
trust,  
These tokens claim to feel and see,  
Read radiant hints of times to be—  
Of heart to heart returning after dust to dust.

Such scope is granted not to lives like  
mine . .

I have lain in dead men's beds, have  
walked

The tombs of those with whom I'd talked,  
Called many a gone and goodly one to shape  
a sign,

And panted for response. But none replies ;  
No warnings loom, nor whisperings  
To open out my limitings,  
And Nescience mutely muses : When a man  
falls he lies.



## MY CICELY

(17—)

“**A** LIVE ?”—And I leapt in my wonder,  
Was faint of my joyance,  
And grasses and grove shone in garments  
Of glory to me.

“She lives, in a plenteous well-being,  
To-day as aforehand ;  
The dead bore the name—though a rare  
one—  
The name that bore she.”

She lived . . . I, afar in the city  
Of fienny-led factions,  
Had squandered green years and maturer  
In bowing the knee

To Baals illusive and specious,  
Till chance had there voiced me  
That one I loved vainly in nonage  
Had ceased her to be.

The passion the planets had scowled on,  
And change had let dwindle,  
Her death-rumour smartly relifted  
To full apogee.

I mounted a steed in the dawning  
With acheful remembrance,  
And made for the ancient West Highway  
To far Exonb'ry.

Passing heaths, and the House of Long  
Sieging,  
I neared the thin steeple

That tops the fair fane of Poore's olden  
Episcopal see ;

And, changing anew my onbearer,  
I traversed the downland  
Whereon the bleak hill-graves of Chieftains  
Bulge barren of tree ;

And still sadly onward I followed  
That Highway the Icen,  
Which trails its pale riband down Wessex  
O'er lynchet and lea.

Along through the Stour-bordered Forum,  
Where Legions had wayfared,  
And where the slow river upglasses  
Its green canopy,

And by Weatherbury Castle, and thencefrom  
Through Castebridge, bore I,  
To tomb her whose light, in my deeming,  
Extinguished had He.

No highwayman's trot blew the night-wind  
To me so life-weary,  
But only the creak of the gibbets  
Or waggoneis' jee.

Triple-ramparted Maidon gloomed grayly  
Above me from southward,  
And north the hill-fortress of Eggar,  
And square Pummerie.

The Nine-Pillared Cromlech, the Bride-streams,  
The Axe, and the Otter  
I passed, to the gate of the city  
Where Exe scents the sea ;

Till, spent, in the graveacre pausing,  
I learnt 'twas not my Love  
To whom Mother Church had just murmured  
A last lullaby.

—"Then, where dwells the Canon's kins-  
woman,  
My friend of aforetime ?"—

("Twas hard to repress my heart-heavings  
And new ecstasy.)

"She wedded."—"Ah!"—"Wedded beneath  
her—

She keeps the stage-hostel  
Ten miles hence, beside the great Highway—  
The famed Lions-Three.

"Her spouse was her lackey—no option  
'Twixt wedlock and worse things ;  
A lapse over-sad for a lady  
Of her pedigree!"

I shuddered, said nothing, and wandered  
To shades of green laurel :  
Too ghastly had grown those first tidings  
So brightsome of blee !

For, on my ride hither, I'd halted  
Awhile at the Lions,  
And her—her whose name had once opened  
My heart as a key—

I'd looked on, unknowing, and witnessed  
Her jests with the tapsters,  
Her liquor-fired face, her thick accents  
In naming her fee.

"O God, why this seeming decision!"  
I cried in my anguish:  
"O once Loved, O fair Unforgotten—  
That Thing—meant it thee!"

"Inured and at peace, lost but sainted,  
Were grief I could compass;  
Depraved—'tis for Christ's poor dependent  
A cruel decree!"

I backed on the Highway; but passed not  
The hostel. Within there  
Too mocking to Love's re-expression  
Was Time's repartee!

Uptracking where Legions had wayfared,  
By cromlechs unstoried,  
And lynchets, and sepultured Chieftains,  
In self-colloquy,

A feeling stirred in me and strengthened  
That *she* was not my Love,  
But she of the guth, who lay rapt in  
Her long reveue.

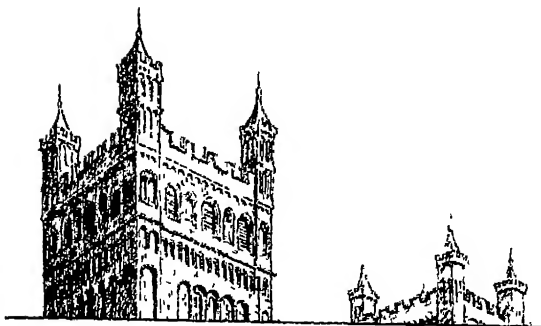
And thence till to-day I persuade me  
That this was the true one ;  
That Death stole intact her young dearness  
And innocence.

Frail-witted, illuded they call me ;  
I may be. 'Tis better  
To dream than to own the debasement  
Of sweet Cicely.

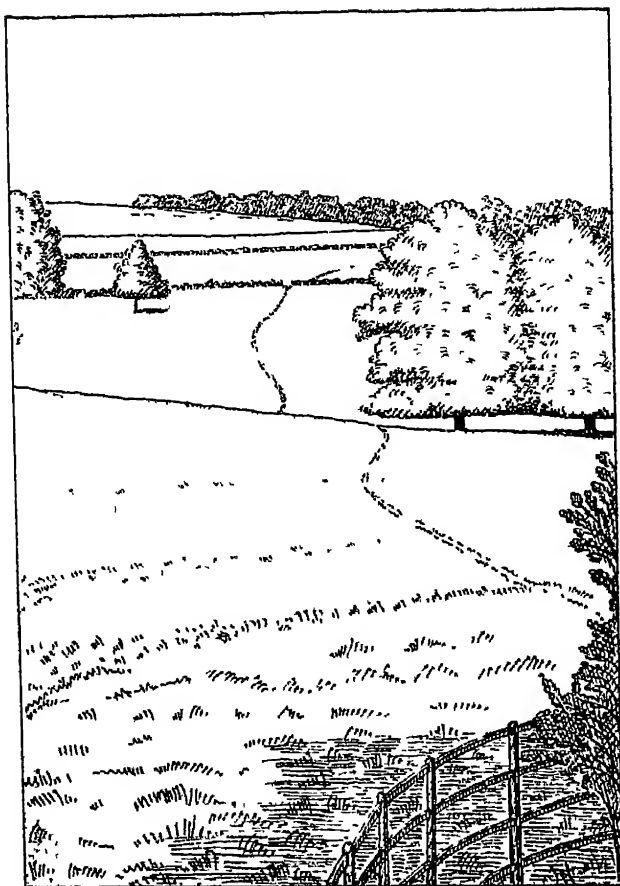
Moreover I rate it unseemly  
To hold that kind Heaven  
Could work such device---to her ruin  
And my misery.

So, lest I disturb my choice vision,  
I shun the West Highway,  
Even now, when the knaps ring with rhythms  
From blackbird and bee ;

And feel that with slumber half-conscious  
She rests in the church-hay,  
Her spirit unsoiled as in youth-time  
When lovers were we.







## HER IMMORTALITY

UPON a noon I pilgrimed through  
A pasture, mile by mile,  
Unto the place where I last saw  
My dead Love's living smile.

And sorrowing I lay me down  
Upon the heated sod :  
It seemed as if my body pressed  
The very ground she trod.

I lay, and thought, and in a trance  
    She came and stood me by—  
The same, even to the marvellous ray  
    That used to light her eye.

“ You draw me, and I come to you,  
    My faithful one,” she said,  
In voice that had the moving tone  
    It bore ere breath had fled

She said “ ’Tis seven years since I died  
    Few now remember me ;  
My husband clasps another bride ;  
    My children’s love has she.

“ My brethren, sisters, and my friends  
    Care not to meet my sprite :  
Who prized me most I did not know  
    Till I passed down from sight.”

I said : “ My days are lonely here ;  
    I need thy smile alway :  
I’ll use this night my ball or blade,  
    And join thee ere the day.”

A tremor stirred her tender lips,  
Which parted to dissuade :  
“That cannot be, O friend,” she cried ;  
“Think, I am but a Shade !

“A Shade but in its mindful ones  
Has immortality ;  
By living, me you keep alive,  
By dying you slay me.

“In you resides my single power  
Of sweet continuance here ;  
On your fidelity I count  
Through many a coming year.”

—I started through me at her plight,  
So suddenly confessed :  
Dismissing late distaste for life,  
I craved its bleak unrest.

“I will not die, my One of all !—  
To lengthen out thy days  
I'll guard me from minutest harms  
That may invest my ways !”

She smiled and went. Since then she comes  
Oft when her birth-moon climbs,  
Or at the seasons' ingresses  
Or anniversary times ;

But grows my grief. When I surcease,  
Through whom alone lives she,  
Ceases my Love, her words, her ways,  
Never again to be !

## THE IVY-WIFE

I LONGED to love a full-boughed  
beech

And be as high as he :

I stretched an arm within his reach,

And signalled unity.

But with his drip he forced a breach,

And tried to poison me.

I gave the grasp of partnership

To one of other race—

A plane : he barked him strip by strip  
From upper bough to base ;  
And me therewith ; for gone my grip,  
My arms could not enlace.

In new affection next I strove  
To coll an ash I saw,  
And he in trust received my love ;  
Till with my soft green claw  
I cramped and bound him as I wove . . .  
Such was my love : ha-ha !

By this I gained his strength and height  
Without his rivalry.  
But in my triumph I lost sight  
Of afterhaps. Soon he,  
Being bark-bound, flagged, snapped, fell  
outright,  
And in his fall felled me !

## A MEETING WITH DESPAIR

AS evening shaped I found me on a moor  
Which sight could scarce sustain :  
The black lean land, of featureless contour,  
Was like a tract in pain.

“This scene, like my own life,” I said, “is  
one  
Where many glooms abide ;  
Toned by its fortune to a deadly dun—  
Lightless on every side.

I glanced aloft and halted, pleasure-caught  
    To see the contrast there :  
The ray-lit clouds gleamed glory ; and I  
    thought,  
    “ There’s solace everywhere ! ”

Then bitter self-reproaches as I stood  
    I dealt me silently  
As one perverse—misrepresenting Good  
    In graceless mutiny.

Against the horizon’s dim-discernèd wheel  
    A form rose, strange of mould :  
That he was hideous, hopeless, I could feel  
    Rather than could behold.

“ ’Tis a dead spot, where even the light lies  
    spent  
    To darkness ! ” croaked the Thing.  
“ Not if you look aloft ! ” said I, intent  
    On my new reasoning.

“Yea—but await awhile!” he cried. “Ho-  
ho!—

Look now aloft and see!”

I looked. There, too, sat night’s Heaven’s  
radiant show

Had gone. Then chuckled he.



## UNKNOWNING

WHEN, soul in soul reflected,  
We breathed an æthered air,  
When we neglected  
All things elsewhere,  
And left the friendly friendless  
To keep our love aglow,  
We deemed it endless . . .  
—We did not know !

When, by mad passion goaded,  
We planned to hie away,

But, unforeboded,  
The storm-shafts gray  
So heavily down-pattered  
That none could forthward go,  
Our lives seemed shattered . . .  
—We did not know !

When I found you, helpless lying,  
And you waived my deep misprise,  
And swore me, dying,  
In phantom-guise  
To wing to me when grieving,  
And touch away my woe,  
We kissed, believing . . .  
—We did not know !

But though, your powers outreckoning,  
You hold you dead and dumb,  
Or scorn my beckoning,  
And will not come ;  
And I say, “ ’Twere mood ungainly  
To store her memory so : ”  
I say it vainly—  
I feel and know !

## FRIENDS BEYOND

WILLIAM DEWY, Tranter Reuben,  
Farmer Ledlow late at plough,  
Robert's kin, and John's, and Ned's,  
And the Squire, and Lady Susan, lie in Mell-  
stock churchyard now !

"Gone," I call them, gone for good, that  
group of local hearts and heads ;  
Yet at mothy curfew-tide,  
And at midnight when the noon-heat breathes  
it back from walls and leads,

They've a way of whispering to me—  
fellow-wight who yet abide—  
In the muted, measured note  
Of a ripple under archways, or a lone  
cave's stillicide :

“We have triumphed : this achievement  
turns the bane to antidote,  
Unsuccesses to success,  
Many thought-worn eves and morrows  
to a morrow free of thought.

“No more need we corn and clothing,  
feel of old terrestrial stress ;  
Chill detraction stirs no sigh ;  
Fear of death has even bygone us : death  
gave all that we possess.”

*W. D.*—“Ye mid burn the wold bass-viol that  
I set such vallie by.”

*Squire.*—“You may hold the manse in fee,  
You may wed my spouse, my children's  
memory of me may decry.”

*Lady.*—"You may have my rich brocades, my  
laces ; take each household key ;  
Ransack coffer, desk, bureau ;  
Quiz the few poor treasures hid there,  
con the letters kept by me."

*Far.*—"Ye mid zell my favourite heifer, ye  
mid let the charlock grow,  
Foul the grinterns, give up thrift."

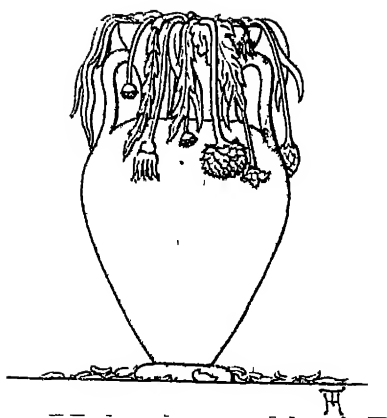
*Wife.*—"If ye break my best blue china, chil-  
dren, I shan't care or ho."

*All.*—"We've no wish to hear the tidings,  
how the people's fortunes shift ;  
What your daily doings are ;  
Who are wedded, born, divided ; if your  
lives beat slow or swift.

"Curious not the least are we if our  
intentions you make or mar,  
If you quire to our old tune,  
If the City stage still passes, if the weirs  
still roar afar."

—Thus, with very gods' composure, freed  
those crosses late and soon  
Which, in life, the Trine allow  
(Why, none witteth), and ignoring all  
that haps beneath the moon,

William Dewy, Tranter Reuben, Farmer  
Ledlow late at plough,  
Robert's kin, and John's, and Ned's,  
And the Squire, and Lady Susan, mur-  
mur mildly to me now.



## TO OUTER NATURE

SHOW thee as I thought thee  
When I early sought thee,  
Omen-scouting,  
All undoubting  
Love alone had wrought thee—

Wrought thee for my pleasure,  
Planned thee as a measure  
    For expounding  
    And resounding  
Glad things that men treasure.

O for but a moment  
Of that old endowment—  
    Light to gaily  
    See thy daily  
Irisèd embowment !

But such re-adorning  
Time forbids with scorning—  
    Makes me see things  
    Cease to be things  
They were in my morning.

Fad'st thou, glow-forsaken,  
Darkness-overtaken !  
    Thy first sweetness,  
    Radiance, meetness,  
None shall re-awaken.

Why not sempiternal  
Thou and I ? Our vernal  
    Brightness keeping,  
    Time outleaping ;  
Passed the hodiernal !



## THOUGHTS OF PHENA

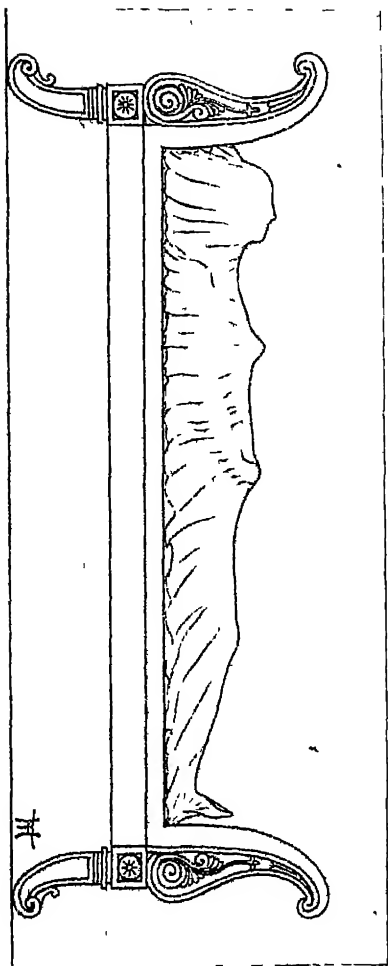
### AT NEWS OF HER DEATH

NOT a line of her writing have I,  
Not a thread of her hair,  
No mark of her late time as dame in her  
dwelling, whereby  
I may picture her there ;  
And in vain do I urge my unsight  
To conceive my lost prize  
At her close, whom I knew when her dreams  
were upbrimming with light,  
And with laughter her eyes.

What scenes spread around her last days,  
Sad, shining, or dim ?  
Did her gifts and compassions enray and  
enarch her sweet ways  
With an aureate nimb ?  
Or did life-light decline from her years,  
And mischances control  
Her full day-star ; unease, or regret, or fore-  
bodings, or fears  
Disennoble her soul ?

Thus I do but the phantom retain  
Of the maiden of yore  
As my relic ; yet haply the best of her—fined  
in my brain  
It may be the more  
That no line of her writing have I,  
Nor a thread of her hair,  
No mark of her late time as dame in her  
dwelling, whereby  
I may picture her there.

*March 1890.*





## MIDDLE-AGE ENTHUSIASMS

To M. H

WE passed where flag and flower  
Signalled a jocund throng ;  
We said : " Go to, the hour  
Is apt ! "—and joined the song ;  
And, kindling, laughed at life and care,  
Although we knew no laugh lay there.

We walked where shy birds stood  
Watching us, wonder-dumb ;

Their friendship met our mood ;  
We cried : " We'll often come :  
We'll come morn, noon, eve, everywhen ! "  
—We doubted we should come again.

We joyed to see strange sheens  
Leap from quaint leaves in shade ;  
A secret light of greens  
They'd for their pleasure made.  
We said : " We'll set such sorts as these ! "  
—We knew with night the wish would cease.

" So sweet the place," we said,  
" Its tacit tales so dear,  
Our thoughts, when breath has sped,  
Will meet and mingle here ! " . . .  
" Words ! " mused we. " Passed the mortal  
door,  
Our thoughts will reach this nook no more."

## IN A WOOD

*See "THE WOODLANDERS"*

PALE beech and pine-tree blue,  
Set in one clay,  
Bough to bough cannot you  
Bide out your day ?  
When the rains skim and skip,  
Why mar sweet comradeship,  
Blighting with poison-drip  
Neighbourly spray ?

Heart-halt and spirit-lame,  
City-opprest,

Unto this wood I came  
As to a nest ;  
Dreaming that sylvan peace  
Offered the harrowed ease—  
Nature a soft release  
From men's unrest.

But, having entered in,  
Great growths and small  
Show them to men akin—  
Combatants all !  
Sycamore shoulders oak,  
Bines the slim sapling yoke,  
Ivy-spun halters choke  
Elms stout and tall.

Touches from ash, O wych,  
Sting you like scorn !  
You, too, brave hollies, twitch  
Sidelong from thorn.  
Even the rank poplars bear  
Illy a rival's air,  
Cankering in black despair  
If overborne.

Since, then, no grace I find  
    Taught me of trees,  
Turn I back to my kind,  
    Worthy as these.  
There at least smiles abound,  
There discourse trills around,  
There, now and then, are found  
    Life-loyalties.



## TO A LADY

OFFENDED BY A BOOK OF THE WRITER'S

NOW that my page uncloses, doomed,  
maybe,

Never to press thy cosy cushions more,  
Or wake thy ready Yeas as heretofore,  
Or stir thy gentle vows of faith in me :

Knowing thy natural receptivity,  
I figure that, as flambeaux banish eve,  
My sombre image, warped by insidious heave  
Of those less forthright, must lose place in thee.

So be it. I have borne such. Let thy dreams  
Of me and mine diminish day by day,  
And yield their space to shine of smugger  
things ;  
Till I shape to thee but in fitful gleams,  
And then in far and feeble visitings,  
And then surcease. Truth will be truth  
alway.

## TO AN ORPHAN CHILD

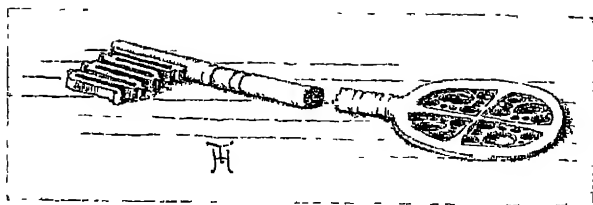
A WHIMSEY

AH, child, thou art but half thy darling  
mother's ;

Hers couldst thou wholly be,  
My light in thee would outglow all in  
others ;

She would relive to me.  
But niggard Nature's trick of birth  
Bars, lest she overjoy,  
Renewal of the loved on earth  
Save with alloy.

The Dame has no regard, alas, my maiden,  
For love and loss like mine—  
No sympathy with mind-sight memory-laden ;  
Only with fickle eyne.  
To her mechanic artistry  
My dreams are all unknown,  
And why I wish that thou couldst be  
But One's alone !



## NATURE'S QUESTIONING

WHEN I look forth at dawning,  
pool,  
Field, flock, and lonely tree,  
All seem to gaze at me  
Like chastened children sitting silent in a  
school ;

Their faces dulled, constrained, and worn,  
As though the master's ways  
Through the long teaching days  
Their first terrestrial zest had chilled and  
overborne.

And on them stirs, in lippings mere  
    (As if once clear in call,  
    But now scarce breathed at all)—  
“We wonder, ever wonder, why we find us  
    here !

“Has some Vast Imbecility,  
    Mighty to build and blend,  
    But impotent to tend,  
Framed us in jest, and left us now to hazardry ?

“Or come we of an Automaton  
    Unconscious of our pains ? . . .  
    Or are we live remains  
Of Godhead dying downwards, brain and eye  
    now gone ?

“Or is it that some high Plan betides,  
    As yet not understood,  
    Of Evil stormed by Good,  
We the Forlorn Hope over which Achievement  
    strides ?”

Thus things around. No answerer I. . .  
Meanwhile the winds, and rains,  
And Earth's old glooms and pains  
Are still the same, and gladdest Life Death  
neighbours nigh.



# THE IMPERCIPIENT

(AT A CATHEDRAL SERVICE)

THAT from this bright believing band  
An outcast I should be,  
That faiths by which my comrades stand  
Seem fantasies to me,  
And mirage-mists their Shining Land,  
Is a drear destiny.

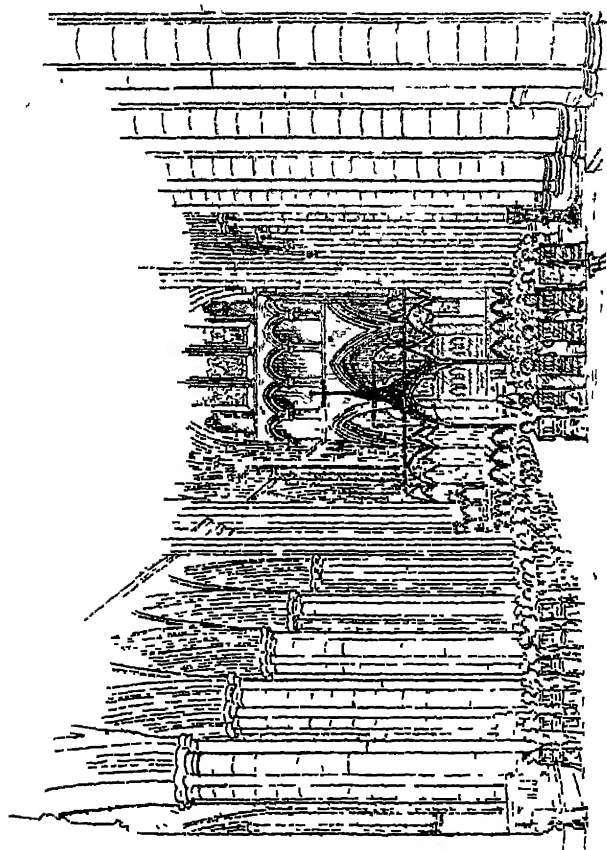
Why thus my soul should be consigned  
To infelicity,

Why always I must feel as blind  
    To sights my brethren see,  
Why joys they've found I cannot find,  
    Abides a mystery.

Since heart of mine knows not that ease  
    Which they know ; since it be  
That He who breathes All's Well to these  
    Breathes no All's-Well to me,  
My lack might move their sympathies  
    And Christian charity !

I am like a gazer who should mark  
    An inland company  
Standing upfingered, with, " Hark ! hark !  
    The glorious distant sea ! "  
And feel, " Alas, 'tis but yon dark  
    And wind-swept pine to me ! "

Yet I would bear my shortcomings  
    With meet tranquillity,  
But for the charge that blessed things  
    I'd liefer have unbe.





O, doth a bird deprived of wings  
Go earth-bound wilfully !

. . . . .

Enough. As yet disquiet clings  
About us. Rest shall we.



## AT AN INN

WHEN we as strangers sought  
Their catering care,  
Veiled smiles bespoke their thought  
Of what we were.  
They warmed as they opined  
Us more than friends—  
That we had all resigned  
For love's dear ends.

And that swift sympathy  
With living love

Which quicks the world—maybe  
The spheres above,  
Made them our ministers,  
Moved them to say,  
“Ah, God, that bliss like theirs  
Would flush our day !”

And we were left alone  
As Love's own pair ;  
Yet never the love-light shone  
Between us there !  
But that which chilled the breath  
Of afternoon,  
And palsied unto death  
The pane-fly's tune.

The kiss their zeal foretold,  
And now deemed come,  
Came not : within his hold  
Love lingered numb.  
Why cast he on our port  
A bloom not ours ?  
Why shaped us for his sport  
In after-hours ?

As we seemed we were not  
    That day afar,  
And now we seem not what  
    We aching are.  
O severing sea and land,  
    O laws of men,  
Ere death, once let us stand  
    As we stood then !



## THE SLOW NATURE

(AN INCIDENT OF FROMM VALLEY)

“**T**HY husband—poor, poor Heart!—is  
dead—

Dead, out by Moreford Rise ;  
A bull escaped the barton-shed,  
Gored him, and there he lies !”

—“ Ha, ha—go away ! ’Tis a tale, methink,  
Thou joker Kit !” laughed she.

“ I’ve known thee many a year, Kit Twink,  
And ever hast thou fooled me !”

—"But, Mistress Damon—I can swear  
Thy goodman John is dead!  
And soon th'lt hear their feet who bear  
His body to his bed."

So unwontedly sad was the merry man's  
face—  
That face which had long deceived—  
That she gazed and gazed; and then could  
trace  
The truth there; and she believed.

She laid a hand on the dresser-ledge,  
And scanned far Egdon-side;  
And stood; and you heard the wind-swept  
sedge  
And the rippling Froom; till she cried:

"O my chamber's untidied, unmade my bed,  
Though the day has begun to wear!  
'What a slovenly hussif!' it will be said,  
When they all go up my stair!"

She disappeared ; and the joker stood  
    Depressed by his neighbour's doom,  
And amazed that a wife struck to widowhood  
    Thought first of her unkempt room.

But a fortnight thence she could take no food,  
    And she pined in a slow decay ;  
While Kit soon lost his mournful mood  
    And laughed in his ancient way.

1894.



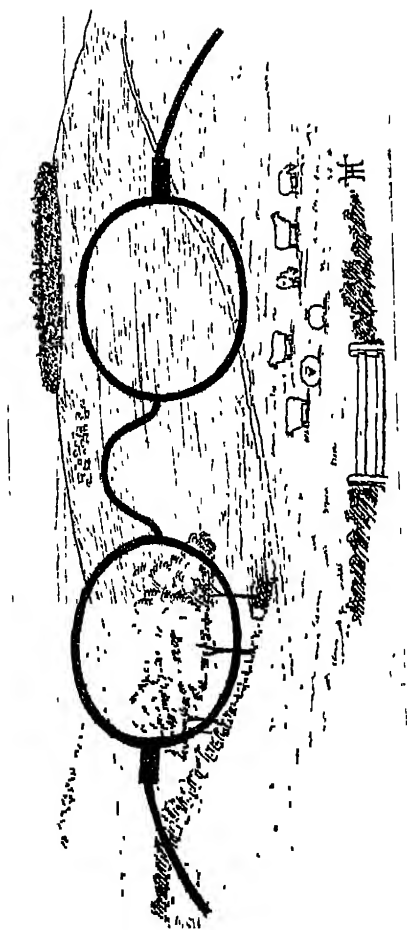
IN A EWELEAZE NEAR  
WEATHERBURY

THE years have gathered grayly  
    Since I danced upon this leaze  
With one who kindled gaily  
    Love's fitful ecstasies !  
But despite the term as teacher,  
    I remain what I was then  
In each essential feature  
    Of the fantasies of men.

Yet I note the little chisel  
    Of never-napping Time,

Defacing ghaſt and grizzel  
The blazon of my prime.  
When at night he thinks me ſleeping,  
I feel him boring ſly  
Within my bones, and heaping  
Quainteſt pains for by-and-by.

Still, I'd go the world with Beauty,  
I would laugh with her and ſing,  
I would ſhun divineſt duty  
To reſume her worſhipping.  
But ſhe'd ſcorn my brave endeavour,  
She would not balm the breeze  
By murmuring "Thine for ever!"  
As ſhe did upon this leaze.



## ADDITIONS



THE FIRE AT TRANTER  
SWEATLEY'S

THEY had long met o' Zundays—her  
true love and she—

And at junketings, maypoles, and flings ;  
But she bode wi' a thirtover uncle, and he  
Swore by noon and by night that her good-  
man should be

Naibour Sweatley—a gaffer oft weak at the  
knee

From taking o' sommat more cheerful than  
tea—

Who tranted, and moved people's things.

She cried, "O pray pity me!" Nought  
would he hear ;

Then with wild rainy eyes she obeyed.  
She chid when her Love was for clinking off  
wi' her.

The pa'son was told, as the season drew near  
To throw over pu'pit the names of the pear  
As fitting one flesh to be made.

The wedding-day dawned and the morning  
drew on ;

The couple stood bridegroom and bride ;  
The evening was passed, and when midnight  
had gone

The folks horned out, "God save the King,"  
and anon

The two home-along gloomily hied.

The lover Tim Tankens mourned heart-sick  
and drear

To be thus of his darling deprived :  
He roamed in the dark ath'art field, mound,  
and mere,

And, a'most without knowing it, found himself  
near

The house of the tranter, and now of his Dear,  
Where the lantern-light showed 'em arrived.

The bride sought her cham'er so calm and  
so pale

That a Norther'n had thought her resigned;  
But to eyes that had seen her in tide-times of  
weal,

Like the white cloud o' smoke, the red battle-  
field's vail,

That look spak' of havoc behind.

The bridegroom yet laitered a beaker to  
dian,

Then reeled to the lnhay for more,  
When the candle-snoff kindled some chaff  
from his grain—

Flames spread, and red vlankers, wi' might  
and wi' main,

And round beams, thatch, and chumley-tun  
roar.

Young Tim away yond, rafted up by the  
light,

Through brimble and underwood tears,  
Till he comes to the orchet, when crooping  
thereright

In the lewth of a codlin-tree, bivering wi'  
fright,

Wi' on'y her night-rail to screen her from  
sight,

His lonesome young Bairbree appears.

Her cwold little figure half-naked he views

Played about by the frolicsome breeze,  
Her light-tripping totties, her ten little tooes,  
All bare and besprinkled wi' Fall's chilly  
dews,

While her great galled eyes, through her  
hair hanging loose,

Sheened as stars through a tardle o' trees.

She eyed en ; and, as when a weir-hatch is  
drawn,

Her tears, penned by terror afore,

With a rushing of sobs in a shower were  
    strawn,  
Till her power to pour 'em seemed wasted  
    and gone  
From the heft o' misfortune she bore.

"O Tim, my *own* Tim I must call 'ee—I  
    will!

All the world ha' turned round on me so!  
Can you help her who loved 'ee, though acting  
    so ill?

Can you pity her misery—feel for her still?  
When worse than her body so quivering and  
    chill

Is her heart in its winter o' woe!

"I think I micht almost ha' borne it," she said,  
    "Had my griefs one by one come to  
    hand;

But O, to be slave to thik husbird for bread,  
And then, upon top o' that, driven to wed,  
And then, upon top o' that, burnt out o' bed,  
    Is more than my nater can stand!"

Tim's soul like a lion 'ithin en outsprung—  
 (Tim had a great soul when his feelings were  
     wrung)—

“Feel for 'ee, dear Barbice?” he cried ;  
 And his warm working-jacket about her he  
     flung,  
 Made a back, horsed her up, till behind him  
     she clung  
 Like a chiel on a gipsy, her figure uphung  
     By the sleeves that around her he tied.

Over piggeries, and mixens, and apples, and  
     hay,

They lumpered straight into the night ;  
 And finding bylong where a halter-path lay,  
 At dawn reached Tim's house, on'y seen on  
     their way  
 By a naibour or two who were up wi' the day ;  
     But they gathered no clue to the sight.

Then tender Tim Tankens he searched here  
     and there

For some garment to clothe her fair skin ;

But though he had breeches and waistcoats  
to spare,  
He had nothing quite seemly for Barbree to  
wear,  
Who, half shrammed to death, stood and cried  
on a chair  
At the caddle she found herself in.

There was one thing to do, and that one thing  
he did,  
He lent her some clouts of his own,  
And she took 'em perforce ; and while in 'em  
she slid,  
Tim turned to the winder, as modesty bid,  
Thinking, " O that the picter my duty keeps  
hid  
To the sight o' my eyes mid be shown ! "

In the tallet he stowed her ; there luddied  
she lay,  
Shortening sleeves, legs, and tails to her  
limbs ;  
But most o' the time in a mortal bad way,

Well knowing that there'd be the divel to pay  
 If 'twere found that, instead o' the elements'  
     prey,  
 She was living in lodgings at Tim's.

"Where's the tranter?" said men and boys;  
     "where can er be?"

"Where's the tranter?" said Barbree alone  
 "Where on e'th is the tranter?" said every-  
     bod-y:

They sifted the dust of his perished roof-tree,  
 And all they could find was a bone.

Then the uncle cried, "Lord, pray have  
     mercy on me!"

And in terror began to repent.  
 But before 'twas complete, and till sure she  
     was free,  
 Barbree drew up her loft-ladder, tight turned  
     her key—  
 Tim bringing up breakfast and dinner and  
     tea—

Till the news of her hiding got vent.

Then followed the custom-kept rout, shout,  
and flare  
Of a skimmington-ride through the naighbour-  
hood, ere

Folk had proof o' wold Sweatley's decay  
Whereupon decent people all stood in a stare,  
Saying Tim and his lodger should risk it, and  
pair :

So he took her to church. An' some laugh-  
ing lads there

Cried to Tim, "After Sweatley!" She said,  
"I declare

I stand as a maiden to-day!"

*Written 1866; printed 1875.*



## HEIRESS AND ARCHITECT

FOR A. W. B.

SHE sought the Studios, beckoning to her  
side

An arch-designer, for she planned to build.

He was of wise contrivance, deeply skilled

In every intervolve of high and wide—

Well fit to be her guide.

“Whatever it be,”

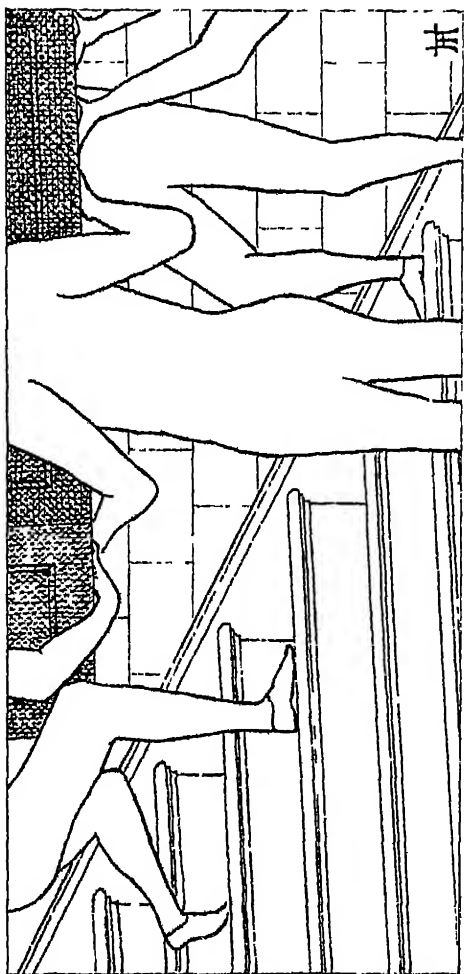
Responded he,

With cold, clear voice, and cold, clear view,

"In true accord with prudent fashionings  
For such vicissitudes as living brings,  
And thwarting not the law of stable things,  
That will I do."

"Shape me," she said, "high halls with  
tracery  
And open ogive-work, that scent and hue  
Of buds, and travelling bees, may come in  
through,  
The note of birds, and singings of the sea,  
For these are much to me."

"An idle whim!"  
Broke forth from him  
Whom nought could warm to gallantries:  
"Cede all these buds and birds, the zephyr's  
call,  
And scents, and hues, and things that falter all,  
And choose as best the close and surly  
wall,  
For winters freeze."





"Then frame," she cried, "wide fronts of  
 crystal glass,  
 That I may show my laughter and my light—  
 Light like the sun's by day, the stars' by  
 night—  
 Till rival heart-queens, envying, wail, 'Alas,  
 Her glory!' as they pass."

"O maid misled!"

He sternly said,  
 Whose facile foresight pierced her dire ;  
 "Where shall abide the soul when, sick of glee,  
 It shrinks, and hides, and prays no eye may  
 see ?  
 Those house them best who house for secrecy,  
 For you will tire."

"A little chamber, then, with swan and dove  
 Ranged thickly, and engrailed with rare device  
 Of reds and purples, for a Paradise  
 Wherein my Love may greet me, I my Love,  
 When he shall know thereof?"

"This, too, is ill,"

He answered still,

The man who swayed her like a shade.

"An hour will come when sight of such  
sweet nook

Would bring a bitterness too sharp to brook,  
When brighter eyes have won away his look ;  
For you will fade."

Then said she faintly : "O, contrive some  
way—

Some narrow winding turret, quite mine own,  
To reach a loft where I may grieve alone !  
It is a slight thing ; hence do not, I pray,  
This last dear fancy slay !"

"Such winding ways

Fit not your days,"

Said he, the man of measuring eye ;

"I must even fashion as my rule declares,  
To wit : Give space (since life ends unawares)  
To hale a coffined corpse adown the stairs ;  
For you will die."

## THE TWO MEN

THERE were two youths of equal age,  
Wit, station, strength, and parentage;  
They studied at the selfsame schools,  
And shaped their thoughts by common  
rules.

One pondered on the life of man,  
His hopes, his ending, and began  
To rate the Market's sordid war  
As something scarce worth living for.

"I'll brace to higher aims," said he,  
"I'll further Truth and Purity ;  
Thereby to mend the mortal lot  
And sweeten sorrow. Thrive I not,

"Winning their hearts, my kind will give  
Enough that I may lowly live,  
And house my Love in some dim dell,  
For pleasing them and theirs so well."

Idly attired, with features wan,  
In secret swift he laboured on :  
Such press of power had brought much gold  
Applied to things of meaner mould.

Sometimes he wished his aims had been  
To gather gains like other men ;  
Then thanked his God he'd traced his track  
Too far for wish to drag him back.

He looked from his loft one day  
To where his slighted garden lay ;  
Nettles and hemlock hid each lawn,  
And every flower was starved and gone.

He fainted in his heart, whereon  
He rose, and sought his plighted one,  
Resolved to loose her bond withal,  
Lest she should perish in his fall.

He met her with a careless air,  
As though he'd ceased to find her fair,  
And said : " True love is dust to me ;  
I cannot kiss : I tire of thee ! "

(That she might scorn him was he fain,  
To put her sooner out of pain ;  
For incensed love breathes quick and dies,  
When famished love a-lingering lies.)

Once done, his soul was so betossed,  
It found no more the force it lost :  
Hope was his only drink and food,  
And hope extinct, decay ensued.

And, living long so closely penned,  
He had not kept a single friend ;  
He dwindled thin as phantoms be,  
And drooped to death in poverty. . .

Meantime his schoolmate had gone out  
To join the fortune-finding rout ;  
He liked the winnings of the mart,  
But wearied of the working part.

He turned to seek a privy lair,  
Neglecting note of garb and hair,  
And day by day reclined and thought  
How he might live by doing nought.

"I plan a valued scheme," he said  
To some. "But lend me of your bread,  
And when the vast result looms nigh,  
In profit you shall stand as I."

Yet they took counsel to restrain  
Their kindness till they saw the gain ;  
And, since his substance now had run,  
He rose to do what might be done.

He went unto his Love by night,  
And said : "My Love, I faint in fight :  
Deserving as thou dost a crown,  
My cares shall never drag thee down."

(He had despoiled a maid whose line  
Would hand her on much corn and wine,  
And held her far in worth above  
One who could only pray and love.)

But this fair read him ; whence he failed  
To do the deed so blithely hailed ;  
He saw his projects wholly marred,  
And gloom and want oppressed him hard ;

Till, living to so mean an end,  
Whereby he'd lost his every friend,  
He perished in a pauper sty,  
His mate the dying pauper nigh.

And moralists, reflecting, said,  
As "dust to dust" in burial read  
Was echoed from each coffin-lid,  
"These men were like in all they did."



## LINES

*Spoken by Miss ADA REHAN at the Lyceum Theatre,  
July 23, 1890, at a performance on behalf of Lady  
Jeune's Holiday Fund for City Children*

BEFORE we part to alien thoughts and  
aims,

Permit the one brief word the occasion claims :  
—When mumming and grave projects are  
allied,

Perhaps an Epilogue is justified.

Our under-purpose has, in truth, to-day  
Commanded most our musings; least the play :

A purpose futile but for your good-will  
Swiftly responsive to the cry of ill :  
A purpose all too limited !—to aid  
Frail human flowerets, sicklied by the  
    shade,  
In winning some short spell of upland breeze,  
Or strengthening sunlight on the level leas.

Who has not marked, where the full cheek  
    should be,  
Incipient lines of lank flaccidity,  
Lymphatic pallor where the pink should  
    glow,  
And where the throb of transport, pulses  
    low ?—

Most tragical of shapes from Pole to Line,  
O wondering child, unwitting Time's design,  
Why should Art add to Nature's quandary,  
And worsen ill by thus immuring thee ?  
—That races do despite unto their own,  
That Might supernal do indeed condone  
Wrongs individual for the general ease,  
Instance the proof in victims such as these.

Launched into thoroughfares too thronged  
before,  
Mothered by those whose protest is "No  
more!"

Vitalized without option : who shall say  
That did Life hang on choosing—Yea or  
Nay—  
They had not scorned it with such pen-  
alty,  
And nothingness implored of Destiny ?

And yet behind the horizon smile serene  
The down, the cornland, and the stretching  
green—  
Space—the child's heaven : scenes which at  
least ensure  
Some palliative for ill they cannot cure.

Dear friends—now moved by this poor show  
of ours  
To make your own long joy in buds and  
bowers



## “I LOOK INTO MY GLASS”

I LOOK into my glass,  
And view my wasting skin,  
And say, “Would God it came to  
pass  
My heart had shrunk as thin !”

For then, I, undistrest  
By hearts grown cold to me,  
Could lonely wait my endless rest  
With equanimity.

But Time, to make me grieve,  
Part steals, lets part abide ;  
And shakes this fragile frame at eve  
With throbbings of noontide.

THE END

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